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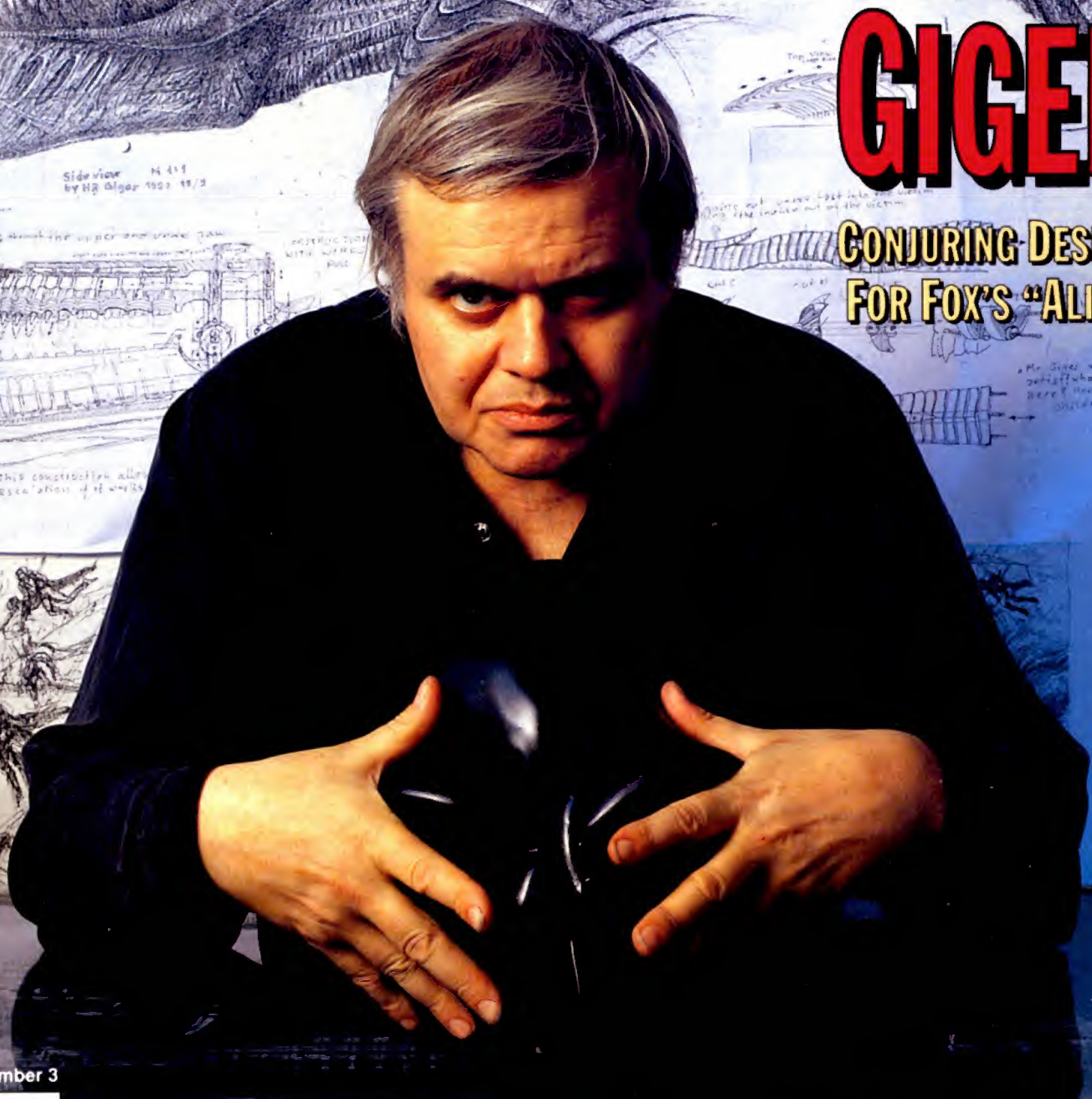
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Volume 1 Number 3

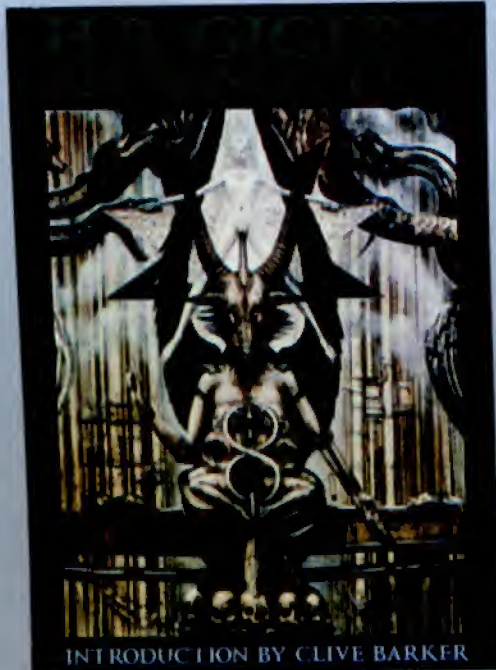


NECRONOMICON

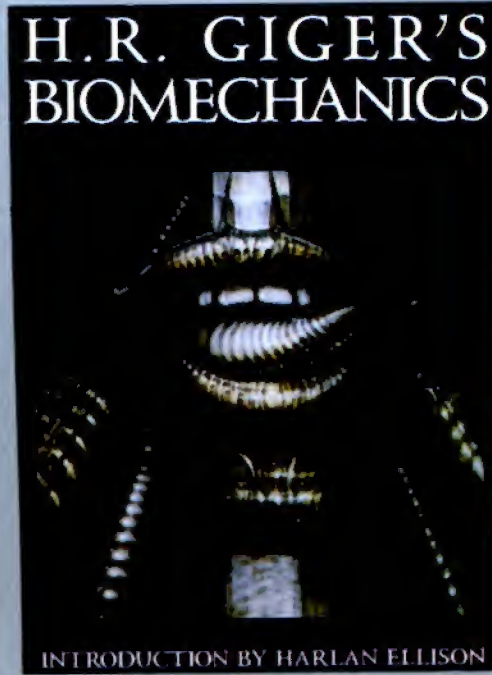
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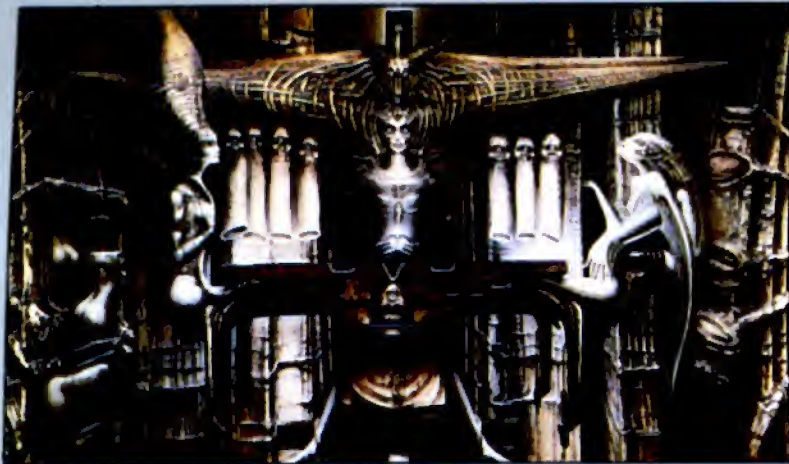
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"The Magazine of Movie Imagination"

SPRING, 1994

CINEMAGINATION

"True beauty has *terror* in it," says Connors, the Irish sea captain in James M. Cain's *Serenade*—a quotation I mention by way of explaining the common thread running between this issue's two main features, which might otherwise seem ill-suited for each other. On one hand, H. R. Giger, of "Alienated," reveals beauty in terror; on the other, Lisa Temming, in "Haunt Couture," adds terror to beauty.

On a more prosaic level, the Giger piece examines another of Hollywood's ill-fated attempts to utilize the Swiss surrealist, whose work so far has been filmed to best advantage in *ALIEN*. If you saw Giger's credit in the theatrical prints of *ALIEN*³ or read articles in *Cinefex*, you probably got the impression that the film merely re-used his original *ALIEN* designs—a misconception perpetuated by every other magazine to cover the film. We document the real story, including faxes from David Fincher promising Giger total control over his creation—a promise which, alas, proved as substantial as a contractual agreement with Kim Bassinger.

"Haunt Couture" is our first fashion layout; given positive response, we may do more. Of course, you might be asking, "Why in *Imagi-Movies* instead of *Femme Fatales*?" Well, when I first suggested having genre actresses model this genre-inspired attire, the *FF* response was: "How revealing are the dresses?" Apparently, there is a concern that readers are interested only in lingerie-clad press kittens. Perhaps I'm naive, but I refuse to believe this. Not that I have moral objections to nudity, but many actresses feel, quite rightly, that they should not be required to remove clothing in exchange for publicity. We should respect this stance and profile them anyway. Part of our goal is to spotlight worthy talent, even if it isn't famous. This pictorial, accompanied by interviews with designer and actresses, is a splendid opportunity to do just that.

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WOLF

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

One of the planet's most distinguished directors decides to make a horror film—his first. A suitably gothic script, about a once-normal man possessed by increasingly homicidal impulses, is crafted from an original story by a well-known American writer. Jack Nicholson is hired—a face-shifter who doesn't need much makeup for the transition from charmingly mischievous to terrifyingly demonic. The director, meanwhile, brings his own transformative charms to bear on the task of transcending the genre. Major money is spent. Marketing teams gear up for a campaign to sell the movie as a quality effort sans the ritual disembowelment of scores of student nurses.

Hey, didn't Stanley Kubrick already make this movie? He did, if we're discussing *THE SHINING*. What we're discussing now, however, is *WOLF*, and the director isn't Kubrick—currently prepping a new science-fiction epic called *A.I.*—but Mike Nichols.

Based upon a screenplay by Jim Harrison, with uncredited embellishments by lifelong Nichols collaborator Elaine May, this Columbia effort co-stars Michelle Pfeiffer (*BATMAN RETURNS*), James Spader (*JACK'S BACK*), and Christopher Plummer (*DREAMSCAPE*). Slated for a March release, *WOLF* showcases a forbidding score by Ennio Morricone (*THE THING*), restrained but moody production design by frequent Tim Burton collaborator Bo Welch (*BEETLEJUICE*), creepy camera work by Giuseppe Rotunno (*FELLINI'S ROMA*), and flesh-crawling creature features by Oscar-winning makeup maven Rick Baker (*GREYSTOKE*).

In *WOLF*, a bookish and browbeaten Nicholson is bitten by a wolf he has hit with his car. Though not his fault, the accident results in his own Kafkaesque canine transformation. At first, the changes seem pleasant: he becomes more aggressive, more effective, more empowered by his

Apocalyptic lycanthropy from the director of *THE GRADUATE*.



Michelle Pfeiffer, Jack Nicholson and Christopher Plummer headline the all-star cast of Columbia Pictures' big-budget werewolf movie, opening June 24.

wolfish proclivities—precisely the qualities needed to thrive in the mildly apocalyptic version of the New York book trade envisioned by Nichols. He pisses on his enemies, rids himself of a traitorous wife, and wins Michelle Pfeiffer's affections. Eventually, however, his transformations get out of hand—or, should we say, paw?

The question, of course, is: Does the world need another werewolf movie? Producer Doug Wick (*WORKING GIRL*) was persuaded it does about three years ago. He chalks this leap of faith up to the moon, the night, and some Bloody Marys aboard a red eye in the company of Harrison.

A "mountain man-poet," according to Wick, the Michigan native, who can be found most winter midnights tramping through the woods near his country cabin, "mentioned he had a lycanthropic dream. In the middle of the night, in the middle of

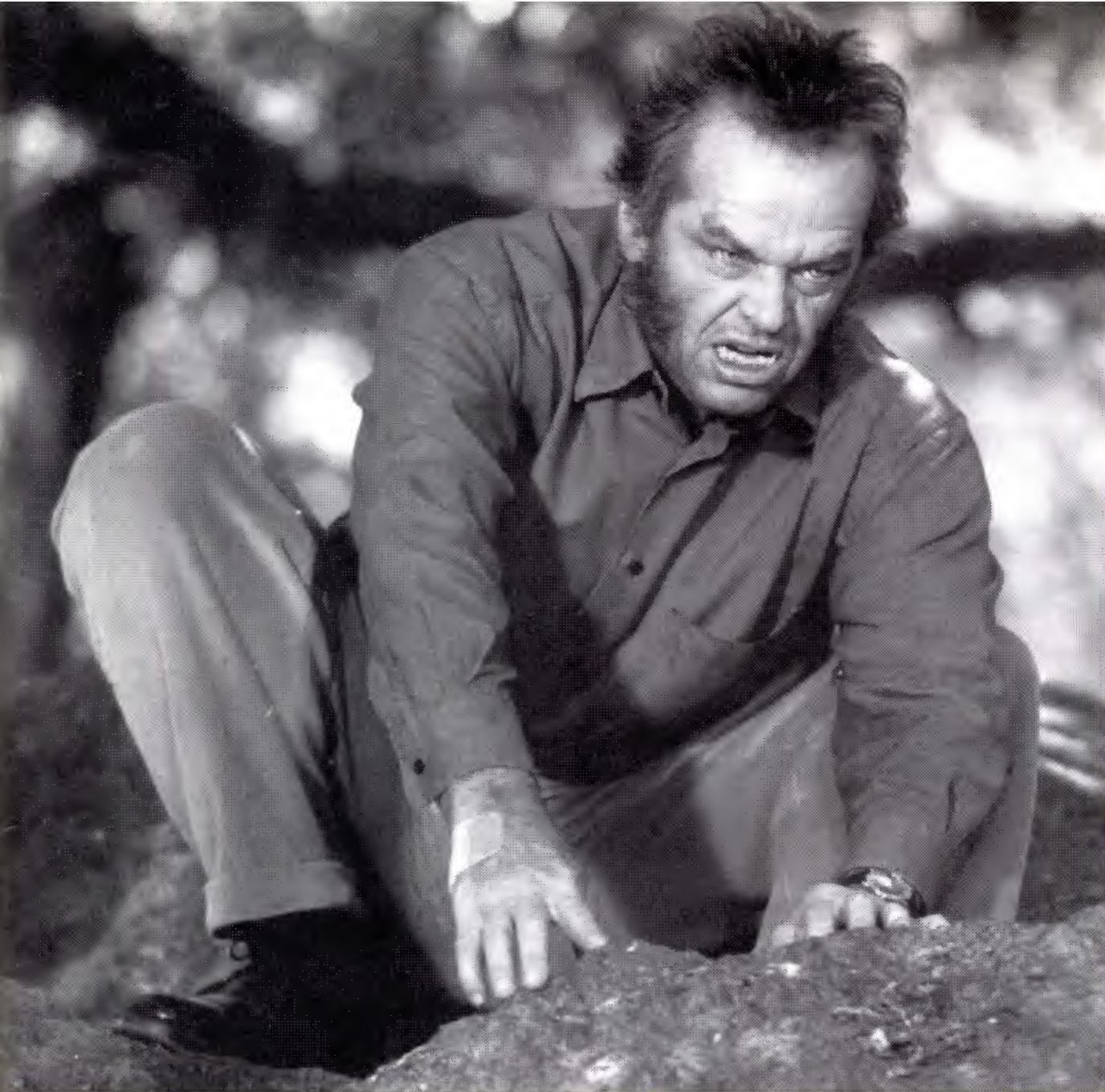
nowhere, with a full moon shining, Harrison felt a certain wolfishness."

Ordinarily, this is not what you want to hear from the guy sitting next to you on a plane at night—not even if you're traveling first class. But Wick was electrified. He learned that Harrison had been mulling the dream over for 10 years, and that Harrison believed somewhere in those "pulls" lay a story. As is frequently the case these days when literature is discussed, the talk moved to deals. A longtime friend of Nicholson's, Harrison said he had once conveyed the substance of his dream to the actor, who showed definite signs of interest.

Harrison and Wick spent the next 18 months panning their respective middle-aged subconscious for cinematic gold. The werewolf as a symbol for puberty had been done many times, most notably in *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF* (1957) and *TEEN WOLF* (1985). So had the werewolf as a cipher for unleashed sexuality and anarchic impulses—check out George Waggner's 1941 interpretation of Curt Siodmak's

THE WOLF MAN or John Landis' 1981 howler, *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*. But what happens when you take the myth and force it to deal with more adult concerns? What happens when you cross a man-wolf with a moral conscience? What happens if becoming a wolf is, no matter how you cut it, almost certainly better than remaining a mouse?

"The structure of the other wolf movies," says Wick, "is that the guy becomes a beast that needs to be terminated. The statement is that by fully becoming your unconscious, you become a dangerous thing that has to be killed. What we wanted to do was deal more with the idea of integration. It would be a more frightening experience, sure. But where we want to end up is not saying that's a part of you that should be repressed, but rather, to see if they could coexist.



Nicholson's face-shifting abilities required relatively minimal assistance from Rick Baker's makeup magic, resulting in an lycanthropic appearance similar to Henry Hull's titular WEREWOLF OF LONDON.

"All of us middle-aged civilized men," he continues, "were once genetically programmed to kill, to fight to survive. We all had this primalness [sic] in our genetic codes. But as we became more social creatures, ultra-civilized and ultra-urban, what happened to those other parts of us?"

"Jim and I started talking about a guy whose experience in civilization had really beaten him up. He was a guy who was in some ways almost withering from his experience in the world. What we wanted to do was introduce a situation where there would be a kind of rebirth or awakening."

Far more unlikely than this theme was the choice of Mike Nichols as director, Wick acknowledges. "We signed Jack first. It helped that he and Mike had a history. My reason for going to Nichols, though, was that the story observed the characters in ultra-real circumstances. And Nichols really is the most gifted social observer that we have. This wasn't TERMINATOR 2, where the guy eats 2000 people.

"There were certainly people," adds Wick, "who doubted the choice. There's always a tendency in Hollywood to pick the last person to do a commercial supernatural movie and say, 'That's our guy' without thinking through the script. Alan Pakula told me after he'd done COMES A HORSEMAN, he suddenly got [offers to

do] 300 westerns, although he'd done all this breathtaking urban work.

"My feeling about Mike was that if he didn't know how to do it he'd say so right away. But if he somehow connected with it, he is above all a great dramatist. Also, given what we were going for, if you didn't bring one of the best filmmakers around to a subtler version of the Wolfman story, it could be just ludicrous."

It was this fear of the ludicrous that caused the screenplay to go through its own series of transformations. According to Wick, the first draft delighted execs at Columbia, but it didn't begin exploring the predicament of a man's transformation into a wolf with enough dispatch. The Harrison screenplay went to Wesley Strick for a rewrite in '92, and then to writer-director Elaine May (MIKEY AND NICKY).

"We chose Elaine May because she was the best choice. Mike had a history of working with her, and she was a big Jim Harrison fan—she knew his essays and novellas. Elaine was very *frum* [Yiddish for pious] with us on keeping to the spirit of Jim's story. One could otherwise have been slightly nervous with her, given that she is the great urban wit, that somehow she'd want to make it more urbane, more Woody Allenish.

"It helped that she hated pretension—and Jim is such an unpretentious source.

“It doesn't observe many of the werewolf conventions. It's more about people changing under the pressure of the end of the world.”

—Director Mike Nichols—

It could just be that she's so smart. A real intellectual is usually the least pretentious. She helped movieize a few ideas. For example, you're trying to explain why Jack's character is so fast falling in love with this Michelle Pfeiffer character. It takes a great movie craft to get that done in a single scene. She brought 30 years of craft to that problem and others like it."

In the end, though, Wick believes that it was and remains Nichols' contribution to the film that proved seminal. For Nichols, WOLF wasn't just about some fellow's peculiar inner journey. It was also about his own sense, as a New Yorker and as an American observer of the fin de siècle malaise engulfing the country, that the world was being flushed, gently though inexorably, down the toilet.

"WOLF works as a kind of fantasy metaphor for the ways in which the world is actually changing," Nichols tells us. "It is about the viruses and the strangenesses at loose in the world, and at the same time it's very much of the moment—it's happening right this minute, in a very urban place. It doesn't observe many of the werewolf conventions. It's more about the actual end of the world as its occurring to all of us. It's about people changing under the pressure of the end of the world." □

Nicholson's character discovers that his newfound canine aggressiveness can be quite a definite asset on the mean streets of New York City.



THE SHADOW

The sinister superhero leaps from the pages of the pulps to the silver screen.

By Mark A. Altman

Can radio's definitive superhero make the transition to the big screen? That's what fans of a legendary pulp-fiction crusader will find out when Universal releases its big-budget version of the venerable crimefighting specter, **THE SHADOW**.

After years of development, filming began last October with Alec Baldwin in the title role. Says producer Martin Bregman (*SEA OF LOVE*), "The Shadow is the original crimefighting anti-hero in pulp literature. He came way before Doc Savage, Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Dishwasher, whatever."

Although **THE SHADOW** has undergone numerous permutations since the original 1930s pulps, the premise has remained the same: socialite Lamont Cranston uses abilities obtained in a Tibetan monastery to fight crime by clouding men's minds and becoming the Shadow. "In those days it was easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys," says Bregman of the Shadow's '30s origins. "The good guys wore white; the bad guys wore black. Here was this amazing crimefighter who wore a black cape and a black hat, who knew what evil lurked in the hearts of men."

Russell Mulcahy, whose *HIGHLANDER* films have not made him a name to be reckoned with, helms Universal's big screen adaptation of *THE SHADOW*.



Alec Baldwin stars as socialite Lamont Cranston, a.k.a. the Shadow, the sinister radio superhero who "knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men."

Unlike previous incarnations, the new version will depict the character's origin, including the time when Cranston embraced evil before using his abilities for good. "The interesting thing for me is he is someone who discovers he has a great gift, which he uses for nefarious purposes in Tibet, and you see that," explains Baldwin. "You see what he was like and the changes he goes through. He is saved by a mystic who teaches him to use these skills for good; then when Cranston goes to New York in 1936, he uses these powers to fight crime, and in order to make that transformation he has to go to a very dark place."

Screenwriter David Koepp, whose recent jaunts in the genre have included co-writing credits on *DEATH BECOMES HER* and *JURASSIC PARK*, was charged with helping the Shadow haunt the big screen. "It's actually been fairly easy," he says. "There have been about 15-20

drafts, which is kind of taxing, but we wanted to create a myth. We also felt that it was really our duty to explain his origin, and it required a lot of thought. I probably worked for three years on this, because we wanted it to be meticulous."

The film's malevolent villain derives from the Shadow pulp novels, a descendant of Genghis Kahn who tries to obtain the world's first nuclear device. "I play Kahn," says actor John Lone, star of *THE LAST EMPEROR*. "His first name is irrelevant. He wants to take over the world, but instead of doing it on horseback, he has the power to possess your subconscious and control your consciousness. He has great potential, which he uses for evil, as opposed to the Shadow, who uses his powers to discover his heart and become more spiritual."

According to director Russell Mulcahy, a veteran of countless music videos and the first two *HIGHLANDER* films, "One of the biggest delights in doing this film is my role in bringing it all to life. We're dealing with a modern myth of great magnitude, and not only is it populated with great characters but also incredible sets and special effects. Even though it's not a special effects movie, I think this film is going to hold a lot of surprises."

One of the greatest challenges for Mulcahy is visualizing a hero who strikes fear into the hearts of men with his chilling and apparently disembodied voice. While easy to manifest on radio, bringing the Shadow's unique abilities to the screen convincingly was far more difficult. "We're using classic theatrical-cinematic techniques, and we're also using state-of-the-art CGI and other effects," says Mulcahy. "The thing about the Shadow is when he does reach down to grab his dark heart, it can become very scary, so there will be a lot of thrills. This film is exciting and suspenseful, but there's also a great amount of humor. This is not a dark, brooding film. I'm not saying anything negative about any films that have been out, but this film



“The Shadow is the original crimefighting anti-hero,” says Martin Bregman. “He came before Superman, Batman, Spiderman Dishwasher, whatever.”

because of the connection.”

Rounding out the ensemble are an eclectic group of veteran screen talent including comedian Jonathan Winters as police commissioner Wanwright Barth; Peter Boyle (OUTLAND) as cab driver Moe Shrevnitz, a Shadow agent; Tim Curry (LEGEND) as Folly Claymore, an irritating scientist;

and theatrical legend Ian McKellen as Margot's father, Reinhardt Lane. Says McKellen, “I liked being in this film with Tim Curry, because when we did AMADEUS on Broadway, he played the goodie and I played the baddie, and now our roles are slightly re-

versed.”

It's a great thrill and, thank God, it's not my responsibility if it doesn't work out.” The film will not be lurking on movie screens until July, but early footage looks spectacular. Baldwin is particularly good as he transforms from a dark-hearted villain in Tibet into the crimefighting apparition in New York. Of the casting, Koepp offers, “I was delighted. I had Alec Baldwin in mind from the time I started. You never get your first choice—ever. I saw his eyes and heard his voice in my head as I was writing.”

With 50 licensees already lined up and millions of dollars invested in bringing the classic character back to the screen, Universal can only hope that, unlike Disney's DICK TRACY, those too young to remember THE SHADOW will still be drawn in by the stylish superheroics of a dark knight who truly knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men. If they're right, Alec Baldwin admits to being interested in a sequel, and, if not, there's always Harrison Ford. □

The Tony Award-winning actor, whose appearances in THE KEEP and LAST ACTION HERO have not earned the acclaim of stage productions like RICHARD III, adds, “This movie is going to be an absolute smash success, but they just wanted to have a little mascot of bad luck in the cast.

Before Universal's adaptation, the crimefighting spectre haunted serials like THE SHADOW RETURNS.



THE SHADOW originated in a series of pulp novels and comic books in the 1930s, before making the transition to radio. [Cover art supplied by Robert Brosch Archival Photography.]



is unique in that there's some great humor in the script.”

Reportedly, a morphing-like technique will be utilized when Lamont undergoes his startling transformation into the Shadow. “One of the reasons THE SHADOW was perfect for radio was he was invisible, so when he clouded men's minds, he could be in the room and you weren't aware of it,” points out screenwriter Koepp. “Obviously, there's an element in film that is not present in radio, which is you can see it. When it makes its jump from one medium to another, there are new rules that have to be invented, and I think we've done a lot of that to make it a really compelling visual event. Russell has worked very hard to find ways to manifest the Shadow as other than an invisible man, because it's not an invisible man story.”

Koepp adds, “To me, the exciting thing about THE SHADOW legend is the network of agents. That's the thing I would really connect with—to think that I, too, could

be an agent of the Shadow. We tried to create the idea of this world in New York that exists below the everyday world.”

Says Baldwin, who had to master the Shadow's sinister laugh, “All of the work for me with this movie has been done by David [Koepp]. The script is so clever and witty and the scenes are so much fun to play that I think it takes care of itself. You say the words and play it as written, which is always a luxury. More often than you like, you have to make more than is there [in the script]. Now, for me, the responsibility is to be as good as what's on the page.”

Starring as Lamont's love interest, Margot Lane, is Penelope Anne Miller, who recently wrapped CARLITO'S WAY with producer Bregman. Miller calls Lane “a glamorous dilettante,” adding that her character has “telepathic powers that aren't recognized until I meet Cranston. Then together we become a stronger force, because I facilitate his powers and become more powerful

H . P . L O V E C R A F T ' S

NECRONOMICON

Brian Yuzna returns to his favorite source of inspiration, H. P. Lovecraft.

By Dennis Fischer
and Steve Biodrowski

The "unmentionable *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred," plays an integral part in the Cthulhu Mythos. The oft-mentioned but seldom-glimpsed volume, which survives only in a few incomplete copies, holds dire implications for humanity, telling as it does of eldritch beings lurking in unknown dimensions, patiently waiting for the day they will destroy humanity and reassume dominion over Earth.

Despite a flurry of ads a decade ago claiming to offer the genuine article for sale, the tome exists only in stories by H.P. Lovecraft and his legion of followers (and, of course, H.R. Giger borrowed the name for collections of his paintings in book form). Now, inspired by the famed horror author's creation, producers Samuel Hadi-

Richard Lynch as Jethro DeLaPore, who uses the *Necronomicon* to summon his dead love from the grave.



Above: Optic Nerve's mechanical dummy stands in for actress Maria Ford (inset), as a woman possessed by Great Cthulhu.



da and Brian Yuzna have fashioned a horror anthology of three tales supposedly contained within the blasphemous book.

H. P. LOVECRAFT'S *NECRONOMICON* stars David Warner, Richard Lynch, Bruce Payne, Belinda Bauer, Maria Ford, Don Calfa, and Signy Coleman, with *RE-ANIMATOR*'s Jeffrey Combs appearing as the reclusive Rhode Island author. Anthony Tremblay handled production design. Special makeup was provided by Screaming Mad George, Tom Savini, Tod Masters, David Sharpe, and Optic Nerve's John Vulich and Everett Burrell, with Doug Beswick handling the mechanical effects.

Screenwriter Brent V. Friedman (*THE RESURRECTED*) contributed in varying degrees to the three episodes, each of which had a different director.

The original concept was to finance an anthology by utilizing three separate cultural blocks of the world that would provide funding: Europe, Asia, and America. Hence, Shu Kaneko from Japan and Christophe Gans from France helmed an episode apiece, while Yuzna handled the third, plus a wraparound.

"Except for *TWILIGHT ZONE: THE MOVIE*, I haven't seen one with different directors. In this one, we very carefully haven't tried to homogenize; the idea was to let each director do what he wanted and see what happened," explains Yuzna. "It could have been a total disaster! Just doing three little movies all at once was something that my producing partner, Gary Schmoeller, and I weren't prepared for, to be honest, because it was so complicated."

The title came about after a fruitless period of developing stories. "It wasn't originally a Lovecraft [adaptation]," Yuzna recounts. "First, the idea was to use the three parts of the world. At one time, we even thought of having them made in different parts of the world, but that started getting ungainly. I finally got to the point where I went back to the old standby and thought, '*Necronomicon*—that's a great name!' We started trying to adapt Lovecraft stories, and we made a wraparound, because the French [financiers] really wanted to see Lovecraft get the book and write stories based on it."

Faithfully adapting the author's stories was soon abandoned in favor of creating a Lovecraftian pastiche, which would hopefully capture the flavor of the original. "Lots of people have written stuff within the Cthulhu Mythos," says Yuzna. "I've read most everything, and it's easy to create stories within that world. I don't know that you can adapt Lovecraft. *RE-ANIMATOR* had some of the flavor, but it just took a situation. I don't know how else you do it."

The framing story presents Lovecraft entering a private and esoteric library of arcane grimoires, supposedly to check facts for his latest story but really to steal the librarian's keys and get a glimpse of the infamous *Necronomicon*. Each



episode represents something recorded in the ancient volume (which creates a certain credibility gap, since all the stories take place in contemporary settings).

Turning Combs into the reclusive writer was a "weird task," according to Optic Nerve's Everett Burrell. "First of all, hardly anybody knows what Lovecraft looked like. Very few photos of him have been published, so we had to dig around a bit." Burrell's partner, John Vulich, did the makeup, "which was basically a chin and a nose. You could only do so much. You couldn't make him heavy, or he would look fey. People are so used to seeing Jeffrey in the RE-ANIMATOR films that it's a nice change."

Combs appreciates the way Vulich's makeup helped capture some of the real character, who was altered for the purposes of the film. "I don't think we were necessarily going for a dead-on, 'Wow, look—that's him!' appearance, but at least we wanted to attempt a resemblance, for the hard-core fans," the actor explains. "I tried to incorporate elements of the real H.P. Lovecraft, but because of the way the script was written, my characterization wasn't the way he really was. So that's why the makeup was a little more important; otherwise, I could have gone in there and just been myself without any alterations, but I wanted to do something that would at least harken back to the real guy."



One of the denizens of Cthulhu's sunken city of R'lyeh rises to bestow the *Necronomicon* on Jethro.

Japanese director Shu Kaneko's "The Cold," loosely inspired by Lovecraft's "Cool Air," is a cautionary tale about the high price of true love, immorality, and immortality. Notes Kaneko, "I was fascinated by the notion of preserving one's life—the idea of never aging and never dying. It is a process that many would like to attain, but I do not think it will ever be possible. In 'The Cold,' Dr. Madden is a very old man who looks about 40. For a man who looks 40, however, he leads a pitiful existence."

Kaneko tells the story of Emily (Bess Meyer), who

Left: Signy Coleman in Yuzna's concluding episode, "Whispers," as an officer pursuing a suspect into the bowels of the earth. Below: David Warner



H. P. LOVECRAFT'S

NECRONOMICON

ELDRITCH ARCHITECT

Tony Tremblay provided four different Lovecraftian settings.

By Steve Biodrowski

Anthony Tremblay was handed the job of production designer on *NECRONOMICON* after working for Brian Yuzna on *TICKS* and *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III*. Tremblay calls the assignment "the most challenging I've done, because it was like making three full-length movies back-to-back! Each segment kept getting more and more complex as the rewrites came in, and there was very little time and money. It obviously cost more [than *RETURN III*], but proportionally speaking, it was more work than any movie I've ever done."

The trilogy format presented several challenges. Tremblay was required to provide "between 12 and 15 major sets, not including locations we dressed" for three directors with different visions. "It's not an easy thing to do," he admits. "You want to make sure that all of them are equally pleased. Inevitably, one segment is harder than the others. In this case, it was 'The Drowned,' which was also the most expensive in terms of the art department. The hotel just could not be found as a location; it had to be built as a set."

"It needed to be seen in its heyday, and it needed to be seen as a rotting structure. You just can't go into a real location and do that. So even when they were looking for locations, I continued to build a study model and design the set, based on the director's storyboards. We built the whole

lower floor and also the second story and the walls leading up to the third story. The exterior was done primarily as a hanging miniature by David Sharpe, shot on location at the beach. Gans wanted that Roger Corman feel."

Tremblay appreciates the economic imperative to use existing locations, but there are limits. "Some of these sets were so unusual that sometimes it's easier to build them," he points out. "The Cold' needed a 3-story Victorian house, and we had to build the laboratory upstairs, because it had a very specific look. But the lower parlor was something that was more cost-effective to do on location. We found a house close to what we wanted; unfortunately, the exterior didn't work, so we had to use a different one and build a few pieces on each of those locations to integrate them."

"Whispers" utilized a modular design (similar to *RETURN III*'s military complex) for the initial stage of the hero's decent, into Mayan-type ruins. "We were able to move them around and make it seem like a maze of columns when in reality we only had about ten of them," Tremblay explains. "When she first drops into the creature, you're not supposed to know, but then it becomes apparent she's in something organic. It wasn't as coordinated with the effects people [Todd Masters] as it should have been, but in the long run I don't think it made much difference, because the effect would have been too ex-



The elaborate hotel setting of Christophe Gans' episode "The Drowned" provided Tremblay with his biggest challenge as a production designer.

pensive to achieve no matter how much planning we had put into it."

The film also gave Tremblay his second chance to design a copy of the titular book. "This is the *Necronomicon* I wanted to do for Sam Raimi in *ARMY OF DARKNESS*, but that one had to look something remotely like the one in *EVIL DEAD II*, which had a sort of twisted face on the cover. I stuck with the same kind of design but on a much bigger book. It turned out fairly interesting, but it was not the book I wanted to do for Sam. I wanted a more ornate version. This one is a bronze skeleton over an animal skin cover, with embossing and engraving on the bronze." □

Tremblay's pre-production painting for "The Drowned," clearly invoking the atmosphere of Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe films, was closely realized in the effects miniature. The airbrushed look of his design for "Whispers," on the other hand, was the victim of a low budget and a short schedule.



moves into a boarding house occupied by a doctor (David Warner) who requires low temperature as part of his experiments in prolonging life. As Emily discovers the true nature of the doctor's research, everything comes unraveled for the shocking climax. To achieve the gruesome effect of a person melting, Screaming Mad George's effects team aimed heat guns at a full-size puppet with latex housing.

For "The Drowned," Christophe Gans was originally asked to adapt "The Rats in the Walls," but little survives. "I tried to play with the Lovecraft mythology much more than to adapt one of his stories, for one single reason: Lovecraft didn't like female characters. Personally, my first interest in cinema is female characters, so I tried to make something like an Edgar Allan Poe romance within the Lovecraft mythology."

Gans worked less closely with Friedman than either Kaneko or Yuzna. He explains, "I don't feel comfortable with the American style. It's too obvious for me; I prefer ambiguity. I just worked with him on one draft; after that, I made my own version. He's much more in the style of the American exploitation movie, and I was trying to make something personal."

The tale follows Edward De-LaPore (Bruce Payne), whose late Uncle Jethro (Richard Lynch) has bequeathed him a hotel and a letter revealing the cruel fate that befell him, a fate his nephew will soon share. The sequence "explores the psyches of two men from the same family who feel extreme guilt over the deaths of a wife and a girlfriend," says Gans. "I think it is much more touching and disturbing if a man is in love with a woman and she comes back from the dead. So I tried to work in that mood. The two women come back from the dead not only out of love, but also to erase the guilt the men felt over their deaths." Edward's girlfriend (Maria Ford) returns from the dead controlled by the undersea Elder God Cthulhu, who rises up from his watery city of R'lyeh to put in a personal appearance. Such elaborate set pieces, coupled with language barriers

“Lots of people have written stories within the Cthulhu Mythos,” says Yuzna. “I’ve read most everything, and it’s easy to create stories within that world.”



Obba Babatundé actually turns out to be one of the lesser evils that Coleman encounters on her downward journey in *NECRONOMICON*'S third episode.

and time constraints, taxed the effects technicians when it came to supplying everything asked of them. "If I thought *FANTASTIC FOUR* was rushed, this was *really* rushed," Burrell laments. "They were so ambitious they would try ideas and waste time, when they could have shot a few effects and made them look good instead of shooting a million and making them look mediocre. They tried to shoot each episode in a week, which is impossible. Of course, all our stuff is, 'Wait till the end of the day, and then shoot ten effects in an hour,' because the actors are more important. If my crew and I sit around with the puppets for 14 hours, they don't have to pay us overtime."

"Whispers" began as Lovecraft's "The Whisperer in Darkness," but, according to Yuzna, the adaptation was a "disaster" that "just didn't work." Yuzna rethought his sequence, keeping in mind that it would be last of the three. "What I tried to do was make it like a third act," he explains. "One of the weaknesses of trilogies is you keep having these mini-beginning, middle, and end structures—a slow set-up and a punch line, then another slow set-up and a

punch line. That gets tiresome to an audience, because over 90 minutes you expect to start out with a lot of questions, cruise for a while, and have a bang-bang ending. I needed to keep the audience awake, so I felt like I'd better open with action."

The episode begins with a chase through the streets of a modern American city leading to an alien underworld beneath the surface. Signy Coleman (*INDECENT PROPOSAL*) stars as a police officer pursuing a suspect through an increasingly surreal and nightmarish landscape. "I made her story one of the guilt of abortion, which is very heavy," Yuzna elaborates. "As she descends, she's stripped of her identity, losing her badge and her shoes, and she's having a miscarriage at the same time. She has a great deal of guilt, because she doesn't believe in anything—like most of us secular people. As she gets stripped down, things get grizzly. She thinks she can handle it until it turns out she's really in another life form that's totally impersonal to her and will take her consciousness and make it a part of itself as a means to propagate. And she'll remain conscious the whole time—

which is one of Lovecraft's horrors. I took that idea further and carried it through to having her paralyzed and amputated. When the horror finally caves in on her, she suddenly finds herself in a hospital, and it seems everything's been one long nightmare. She has an epiphany and says, 'I was wrong to feel the way I did—you do have to believe in something.' Of course," Yuzna adds with a laugh, "I wouldn't let you off the hook that way! I loved the idea of a creature under the earth with such a different life cycle that we wouldn't even know it exists. Making it so big, not a traditional monster, is very Lovecraftian."

Completed late last year, *NECRONOMICON* will be distributed internationally by August Entertainment. Though no domestic date has been set as of press time, Yuzna believes New Line is interested. Also, the film may end up being used as a cable network or syndicated TV pilot for a proposed anthology series to be helmed by young American, Japanese, and European filmmakers, each giving a personal vision of the Lovecraftian world. The tie-in for the series would be the *Necronomicon*, with its ominous incantations leading to distinctive stories with no casting or location limitations. □

Yuzna directs the initial stage of Coleman's descent on Tony Tremblay's Mayan-inspired sets.



SINISTER SENTINEL

●United Artists is trying to get the next James Bond film off the ground. Michael France (CLIFF-HANGER) is currently working on a script, and the studio is anxious to sign Anthony Hopkins as the villain, which is apparently the only thing that will reinstate Timothy Dalton's license to kill. Though awaiting a finished script, Hopkins is reportedly interested in the offer, since the series is still considered a big deal in his British homeland.

●Beginning production later this year is the sequel to HBO's highly rated telefilm, CAST A DEADLY SPELL. Joe (ATTACK OF THE 50-FOOT WOMAN) Dougherty returns to pen the new script, WITCHHUNT. "It was discussed as a series, but I've deliberately not let that happen, because I was concerned there was no way to sustain it, and it would turn into THE NIGHT STALKER," says the scribe. "The sequel is set three years later, in 1951, and it's basically THE CRUCIBLE with fedoras. It's my version of the blacklist, but with magic: 'Are you now or have you ever been a witch?'"

Dougherty's rewrite of 50-FOOT WOMAN broke ratings records for HBO when it aired in November. (For those without the premium pay cable station, there's an April repeat on Fox.) Daryl Hannah, who grows to mammoth proportions in the telefilm, explains of her decision to become an actress: "I liked to pretend as a kid, and I decided I wanted to keep doing it. I



If a script is ever approved and a villain ever cast, fans may get to see Timothy Dalton renew his 007 license to kill in the first James Bond film of the 1990s.

realized it was something you could do for a living when I was about eleven. A camera didn't follow somebody around to the land of Oz; someone was hired to go to Oz. I decided that was the job for me."

●IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS stars JURASSIC PARK's Sam Neill and FRIGHTNIGHT II's Julie Carmen, the latter as a book editor investigating the disappearance of a bestselling horror author. (If it's Stephen King, let's hope she doesn't find him!) "It's not a horror film," the actress insists. "It's a mind-bending psychedelic thriller. It makes you think about things you've never thought about before.

Why else go to the movies? Jurgen Prochnow, John Carpenter, and I had these conversations that, since the industrial revolution, we have done more damage to the earth than in all the time before, and that the consumer-oriented mentality of the human race is going to destroy the earth. We all know it, and we all live with it. We all live with the fact that there is an atomic power plant on the San Andreas Fault."

●Imagi-Movies mourns the loss of two greats in the realm of *cine-fantastique*: Federico Fellini and Vincent Price. Price of course was well known for his aristocratic brand of villainy, which made him heir to Karloff and Lugosi without ever having to play monsters. Although he didn't become a horror star until later in his career, his early screen appearances in TOWER OF LONDON and THE INVISIBLE MAN RETURNS (1939) made him the last remaining survivor from Universal Pictures' golden decade of classic horrors. His death marks the end of an era.

Fellini, because of his art house reputation, does not immediately come to mind as a genre filmmaker. Nevertheless, his break with the Italian neo-realist tradition of the 1950s led him to explore the full range of what cinema could achieve, even if that achievement took him beyond the boundaries of conventional realism. The "Toby Dammit" episode of SPIRITS OF THE DEAD was probably his only true genre piece, but films like 8 1/2 and ROMA contained excursions into fantasy, and all his films

seemed to take place within a fantastical world of his own creation. Fellini did not pioneer cinematic surrealism (Luis Bunuel had done that decades before), but Fellini added a zest and exuberance nowhere evident in the iconoclastic Bunuel.

●Gale Anne Hurd's latest is PRISON COLONY, starring Ray Liotta, which will be released in July by Savoy Pictures. According to the producer, the independently-financed film was an impossible sell at the major studios, who were insisting that the all-male futuristic prison-island picture should have female representation in the cast. "[Producer] Jake [Eberts] would have been happy to have a studio partner, but we were getting all kinds of 'helpful' suggestions that we felt weren't really in the best interests of the project, like, 'Can't you put women in it?' Jake is one of those people who feels that, if you don't want to take someone else's advice, don't take their money, and we didn't. It simply didn't make sense. Most of my films star women, anyway. If that had been the case, the movie would have been about a woman and how she survives; since that wasn't the story we were telling, I thought it would be completely gratuitous to put a woman in there."

●After the overseas success of FORTRESS, the *previous* futuristic prison picture, a sequel is already in development, with Stuart Gordon again attached to direct. Fans need not fear that science-fiction success has lured him permanently away from cult horror. The director still has SHADOW OVER INNSMOUTH (at Full Moon) and FAUST (at Manley) in development. The latter is "based on a kind of X-rated comic, written by David Quinn and Tim Vigil," he explains. "I understand it's the Number 2 black-and-white comic, second only to NINJA TURTLES. In Hollywood-speak, the way I've been describing it is 'BATMAN Meets BASIC INSTINCT.'" It's about a psychotic superhero who slashes and dices his victims, in a satanic storyline loosely based on the FAUST legend. The villain is named simply 'M,' which probably stands for Mephistopheles, and the Faust character is rebelling against him, trying to bring him down. There was a lot of interest at the A.F.M., so it seems like it's moving onto a fast

"Good night, sweet prince, and flights of Angels sing thee to thy rest."



track."

● The Ackermonger himself stars in the low-budget thriller CEREMONY, playing a role he claims was originally intended for a more well-trained horror thespian. "I believe they really wanted Vincent Price for this part, but they got me for half-price," says aging punster and publisher, Forrest J (no period) Ackerman, who fancies a resemblance between himself and the late great actor.

● When it comes to throwing a party no one does it better than *Cinefantastique*, or so said the nearly 200 industry big-wigs who

the food, and left.

Other celebrity guests included an array of behind-the-scenes genre talent: Curtis Harrington, who directed James Caan in *GAMES*, Phillip Wadilove, who produced Vincent Price's *WITCHFINDER GENERAL* (a.k.a., *THE CONQUEROR WORM*), and Trace Torme, who scripted *Tierney's TNG* episode.

Also attending were many southland-based correspondents for *CFQ*, *FF*, and *Imagi-Movies*. Among those kicking back and rubbing elbows were scribes Mike Kaplan (wearing a functional lampshade on his head); Dennis Fischer and wife; *FF's* Ari Bass, Larry Greenberg, Gary Garfinkle, and many others. Bearing a striking resemblance to Joel Silver, bearded *CFQ* veteran Sheli Teitelbaum, sans pajamas, came dressed as an Israeli soldier. Slightly more creative was sfx journalist Les Paul Robley, who came garbed as the Robot Monster. In fact, this reporter didn't even realize who it was until after he left.

The affair was hosted by *IM* editor Steve Biodrowski, who came disguised as a reporter (a ruse he has been perpetuating in real life for many years, with considerable success), and by Mark A. Altman, who waddled in as Chaplin's Little Tramp (on the lookout for a few tramps of his own, no doubt).

Among the highlights for the many guests who filled their bags with complimentary magazines were luscious screen siren Cameron (dressed as Jessica Rabbit) and her equally alluring friend, Ty Parke. Their late arrival helped perk up the flagging festivities; soon, few male partygoers could take their eyes off the mesmerizing duo. Fresh off shooting her latest

Method actress Denice Duff has apparently remained in vampiric character since *SUBSPECIES II*.



Dennis Fischer, Ted Newsom, Steve Biodrowski, Ty Parke, Sheldon Teitelbaum, and Cameron display door prizes: complimentary *CFQ* pens.

episode of *TNG*, Cameron not surprisingly devoured *CFQ's* recent *TREK* double issue, much to the delight of Treksperter Altman.

Throughout the course of the evening, the writers toasted *CFQ* editor and publisher Frederick S. Clarke, whose publication is nearing its 25th anniversary, while also making plans to unionize in protest of their Sinclair Lewis-like working conditions (just kidding, Fred!). Guests also lamented the absence of *Femme Fatales* mastermind Bill George, whose magazine of barely clad babes has been a hit with readers while driving its writers cuckoo. Unfortunately, the Nick Clanos of editors was safely ensconced at Chiller Theatre on the east coast, along with his inseparable associate archaeopteryx-er, editrix—the Chekhov-trained New York stage actress Debbera Rochon. In their place came reformed ghost editor Ted Newsom, making the rounds of writers whose work he has vowed never again to translate into *Femme Fatales*-speak.

After an evening of feeding and carousing, the guests agreed to return a year hence to celebrate another Happy Halloween, and the bartenders sighed in relief.

● Steven Spielberg has sold NBC a new series entitled *EARTH II*. After *SEAQUEST*, why would anybody buy a used car from this man, let alone big-budget TV science-fiction? Spielberg admitted to Tom Shales of *THE WASHINGTON POST*, in a rare interview, "I don't know why I'm in the television business. I guess I still feel a debt,

because I started [there]. TV gave me my break, so I still feel like I want to do something good on television. I've never done anything really show-worthy at night, and I just feel like I'm going to stick with it until something good comes out of my company. And then I'll quit." It could be a long wait.

● And speaking of long waits, the likelihood of a reported *FEMME FATALES* movie getting off the ground is right up there with the chances of Spielberg producing a good TV series.

● See you on Stage 17.

Effervescent Debbi Dutch arrived costumed as a fantasy princess, not a very big stretch of the imagination.



converged on Barefoot restaurant last October 30th to celebrate the magazine's second annual Halloween Conclave.

The event drew writers, directors, special effects wizards, and stars from every facet of the genre, including such diverse talents as film noir heavy (literally) Lawrence Tierney, who has appeared in such genre fare as *THE RUNESTONE* and *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*; Denice Duff, who came dressed (not surprisingly after her role in *BLOODSTONE: SUBSPECIES II*) as a beautiful vampiress; Deborah Dutch, who was attired as a fantasy princess (who can argue?) and accompanied by Ferdinand Mayne (Count Von Krolock in Polanski's *FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS*); and *Femme Fatales* centerfold Ava Cadell and barbarian queen Toni Naples, who came as their beautiful selves. Jim Wynorksi, Gary Graver, and Fred Olen Ray headed the *DINOSAUR ISLAND* contingency. Unable to afford hors d'oeuvres at the cast-and-crew screening of their film earlier in the week, they arrived early, ate all

Film noir heavy Lawrence Tierney charmed the paparazzi with his genial personality and warmth.





Giger sets

By Les Paul Robley

On July 28th, 1990, Swiss surrealist H.R. Giger was approached for the second time to redesign his creature for ALIEN 3. Giger's services had previously been solicited by producer Gordon Carroll during Vincent Ward's ill-fated tenure as director, but the artist had not been available at that time. Next, David Fincher, the third director assigned to the troubled production, visited Giger in Switzerland, accompanied by Fred Zinnemann. Although the artist was not offered a script, which was constantly being rewritten, he accepted the offer, believing he would have total freedom to improve upon his creations and rectify some qualitatively inferior details from ALIENS (on which he had not worked). Giger was supposed to rethink the life forms from ALIEN, providing an aquatic face-hugger, a chest-burster, the Alien skin, and a four-legged version of the adult Alien. Because of his former close collaboration with Ridley Scott, Giger believed he would have the same kind of relationship with Fincher.

During the initial meeting, Fincher showed "some sketches made by people who would be responsible for the 'execution' of the work," Giger recalls. "These looked rather like a bird. There was no similarity to the Alien, and they were far from my ideas." Although Fincher would insist that Giger not feel restricted by such "reference points," adding, "We want you to feel free to give your Giger all," Giger now recognizes this as the first indica-

Giger's fantastic artwork for DEAD STAR (see Page 16), one of many unrealized projects to earn him the title "designer of development hell."

ALIENATED

the record straight on designing ALIEN 3.

tion that his was not the only design input being solicited.

The artist was employed for one month, faxing drawings to Pinewood Studios, England, where production was taking place. Fincher would fax comments back to Zurich (see quotes), where Giger could make adjustments. Giger adjusted his style for fax transmissions, which could not do justice to his famed airbrush technique. "For ALIEN 3 I started working in black-and-white with a Rapidograph drawing pen," he told journalist Jan Doense. "The various tones of gray in my drawings are conceived by drawing small stripes—the more, the darker. I think the fax machine is a great invention. I hardly have to leave my house anymore! So when I go to bed around 6:00 a.m., after having worked all night, I can transmit that night's work from my bedroom. So for the moment, the airbrush is out of work, but this is bound to change, because people keep asking me for it."

Though given little time, Giger came up with interesting improvements. "I worked like crazy on it," he now recalls. "I had special ideas to make it more interesting. I designed a new creature, which was much more elegant and beastly, compared to my original. It was a four-legged Alien, more like a lethal feline—a panther or something. It had a kind of skin that was built up from other creatures—much like a symbiosis. The skin was designed to produce musical tones; it had valves like a saxophone clap. How the Alien felt would be accompanied by sound."

The artist was perplexed, however, when Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis of Amalgamated Dynamics, the company re-



The original ALIEN remains the only film which utilized Giger as more than a concept artist, allowing him on set to realize his designs to his own satisfaction.

sponsible for the execution of the creature, said on the telephone that they had their own design. Giger, who received an Oscar for his original Alien creation, believed his only concern was the interpretation approved by the film's director, which was then supposed to be executed as precisely as possible. "The Alien has been my baby, so when I was asked to change the creature into a less humanoid beast, I hoped that my decisions would be done without other ideas," he complains. "I was naive about Hollywood. I thought, since I got an Oscar for my Alien, it would be me who gave advice on how it would look. When Woodruff and Gillis said they had their own ideas, I was very upset. They said that they liked my work and might use some of my sketches but that they would make their own interpretation. When I heard that Fincher listened to them more than to me, I wondered why."

In an interview with Mark Burman in England, Fincher said of his involvement with Giger: "We worked with him and used as much of his input and ideas as we could...More importantly, we thought: How can we make this thing scary again? On the second film they compromised on the actual mechanics of each of the creatures and made it more like a bunch of pissed-off Jacques Cousteaus. It worked because of the sheer scale and how little you saw of these fleeting glimpses in the strobes of the machine guns firing. We really wanted to do something that was more elegant and simple."

Once all of Giger's designs were submitted, the production severed contact, apparently under pressure to meet the film's rapidly approaching start

GIGER

DEAD STAR

This black hole led Giger into development hell.

By Dennis Fischer

With *DEAD STAR*, director William "Bill" Malone hoped to create the first space epic of the '90s on a mere \$10 million budget; instead, he appears to have taken Hans Rudi Giger on another trip into the black hole of development hell. Backed by a talented team, which also included production designer Michael Novotney (*GRAND TOUR*) and low-budget special effects artists *par excellence* Robert and Dennis Skotak (*ALIENS*), Malone's brainchild centered around a black hole which could be a gateway for mankind to span the galaxy or a portal through which the legions of hell were unleashed.

Malone originally had planned to follow-up his *ALIEN-*

Malone's own design for the alien temple incorporated the "Thanatron" device designed by Giger.

inspired efforts *SCARED TO DEATH* and *CREATURE* with *THE MIRROR* [CFQ 18:4:32], a project based on Giger's book *Necronomicon*, which provided preproduction images for the world beyond the Mirror. The project was given a start date by Orion Pictures, but after George Romero's *MONKEY SHINES* failed at the boxoffice, the project was canceled; the reason given was that "horror films don't make money."

"It didn't work out, and perhaps that's just as well," Giger philosophizes. "It would have cost a lot of money to do it well, but Bill Malone usually makes his films on very small budget, and I couldn't think of a way to do this film as a low-budget production. He dropped by around Christmas [1990] and asked me to poster design for a science fiction film called *DEAD STAR*—sort of a *HELLRAISER* in space. I also did some production designs for the film, which I sent to him by fax. Frankly, I did it out of friendship, because Bill is such a nice person."

Giger's friendship with the director extends back to the time when Malone, while making monster masks for Don Post Studios, was sent to cover *ALIEN*. The pair developed a rapport based on a shared interest in sculpture and design. As a result, after the aborted *MIRROR*, Malone brought the talented and outre artist into his plans for his horror-in-space picture, the premise of which is that mankind encounters an alien machine capable of literally taking him to hell. "We actually meet



Giger's version of the devil, conceived for Malone's "*HELLRAISER* in space"...

the devil in space," was Malone's description. "The premise is that once somebody dies, his soul goes to an actual place, another dimension, and you can get there, physically, by using this machine."

DEAD STAR was to be set in 2239, when a starship commander named Tennison absconds with a spaceship to track down a demented archaeologist who murdered his wife. "The expedition finds an alien machine capable of reanimating the dead and transporting them to Hell," according to Malone. "One side effect is that you start having terrible, nightmarish hallucinations, so

the hero thinks he's losing his mind and doesn't realize this machine is generating these images."

Malone himself made extensive contributions to the production design: "I designed the spaceship interior. I worked with Giger on the design, although I don't want to take away from his work. We definitely worked closely. He's come up with some marvelous stuff, things nobody else would have ever thought of. Giger, of course, designed everything in the Hellish world. We asked him to design the demon in the picture and a few other elements, and he sent us

This early concept for one of *DEAD STAR*'s many demonic visions, unleashed by the Thanatron device, was painted by director Malone himself.



FINCHER VIA FAX TO GIGER

“This looks great! Finally, we are all excited again. We want you to feel free to give your all...I am doing everything in my power to ensure you have control over your creation.”

date. Despite this, Giger continued to fax suggestions to Fincher because of his enthusiasm for the project. Working with longtime collaborator Cornelius de Fries, a specialist in model construction, Giger built maquettes based on his drawings. At his own initiative, he made a full-size, seven-foot sculpt of the Alien. He offered it to the production just for the cost of pulling the mold, not charging for his time; the offer was declined. Then a short film was shot for reference and accuracy, but the production did not want that, either.

At the time, Giger referred to such situations as “frustrating,” adding, “for my own satisfaction, I made some life-size drawings based on the modifications I did on the creature. Hopefully, they will be published by the Dark Horse Company in a signed and numbered edition, as a portfolio. Thus, one will be able to compare my designs with those used for the film. You know, I think filmmakers are always afraid to collaborate with artists like me, because they think we will cause them trouble. Whereas I just want to be creative. Nevertheless, I’m looking forward to the finished film.”

Giger’s close working relationship with Ridley Scott on ALIEN misled him into believing he would have a similar relationship with David Fincher on ALIEN 3.



And don't get me wrong, I do hope it will be a success.”

What Giger did not realize then (because he had not been told) was that ADI had been contracted during Ward's term not only for the execution of the new Alien but for its design as well. “David Fincher neglected to inform me that Woodruff and Gillis were also contracted to take care of the redesign of the Alien—I found out much later,” Giger recounts. “I thought I had the job and that Woodruff and Gillis would work from my plans. On their side, they were convinced that it was their job and accepted my ‘suggestions’ with pleasure. They believed that all my effort was based on a huge love for the matter, because I worked hard even after my contract was over. Today, I am convinced that it was a game by Fincher to keep both sides happy and obtain the maximum for his movie.”

Looking back, Giger believes that Fincher, a newcomer to the franchise, ultimately relied on advice from Woodruff and Gillis because of their experience with Stan Winston on ALIENS. “I can understand that they would not have wanted me as their ‘boss’—I know



Director David Fincher discusses a scene with the noticeably bipedal man-in-a-suit, ADI's Tom Woodruff.

it's probably not everybody's wish to work with me,” he laughs. “Because they worked longer on it, they could do their own things, so it was not necessary after the first month to engage me any more.”

As a result, what reached the screen did not fully utilize Giger's work. “I wish Ridley Scott had come back. He had said to me, ‘If we ever do another, you'll create a new monster.’ Working with him would have been wonderful—not a man with no experience,” he laments. “They told me that the Alien this time would be intelligent; it would be special. But, in the end, it was just a slimy creature.”

During principal photography, ADI abandoned Giger's four-legged version of the Alien and instead opted for an upright-walking man-in-a-suit approach, as in the original film. Also abandoned was the spectacular first appearance Giger devised for the creature. Dubbed the “Bambi-burster,” the newborn Alien was originally to burst from an ox and wobble unsteadily on all fours, like a fawn. Unfortunately, scenes filmed by ADI

continued on page 20

...one of his many unused designs.

reams of drawings and stuff which were great—he drew everything from the spaceship that the good guys were using to things we never even dreamed of having him design.”

To bring Giger's two-dimensional drawing to three-dimensional “life,” Malone planned to bring him to the set to work on the material himself, which he was quite willing to do. Malone considered Giger's own textual values essential in order to obtain the proper look, both fascinating and believable. Giger's only hands-on experience in a major film remains ALIEN; subsequent projects, like POLTERGEIST II and ALIEN 3, have failed to fully realize his designs on film.

“Giger has come up with some really remarkable ideas for this picture, things nobody's ever seen before,” Malone enthused at the time. “In fact, I spent 10 days with him in Switzerland, and he would have so many ideas that you had to keep slowing him down. ‘Giger, please, let's concentrate on this one,’ because he would throw out so many ideas that a few would get lost in the shuffle—you had to grab them while they were still there.” □

Quotes from H.R. Giger provided by Jan Doense.

GIGER

ALIEN EFFECTS

ADI claims to have redesigned Giger's Alien.

By Tim Prokop

Central to director David Fincher's concept for ALIEN 3 was the premise that the Alien take on some of the characteristics of its host. It was initially planned that the Alien would develop within an ox, but this was later changed to a dog. As a result, the Alien that terrorizes Fiorina 161 is a quadruped, equally at home on both two and four legs.

The task of realizing the new Alien and showing its evolution from birth to maturity fell

ADI's immobile mechanical version of the new Alien, which was used for close-ups of the drooling head.



to Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis of Amalgamated Dynamics Incorporated (ADI), who had been key members of Stan Winston's effects team for ALIENS.

"The Alien was so well known that there wasn't a lot we could do with it except try to make it look even more alien than in the first two films," explains Woodruff. "Most of our changes were stylistic, because we really wanted to go back to the original paintings and designs for Giger, which hadn't been fully realized."

Giger's paintings tap into something that's frightening and at the same time very fascinating," adds Gillis. "Things like car parts and mechanical features are integrated loosely into his original designs for the Alien, and I think this weird combination of human, machine, and bone is one of the things that makes it so unique and terrifying. We tried to suggest these same shapes, but in a very organic way."

Gillis and Woodruff were in London preparing for the film when they were surprised by a telephone call from Zurich. "When we were told it was Giger on the line, we really didn't know what to expect," says Woodruff. "We'd been fans of his work for years, but we'd heard a lot about him being temperamental, and we didn't know whether he liked or hated what we did on ALIENS. We didn't know if he was calling to congratulate or abuse



Lane Liska (standing) and Craig Talmy puppeteer the agile, panther-like version of Alien added in post-production by Richard Edlund's Boss Film.



us," Woodruff laughs. "As it turned out, he couldn't have been nicer."

Gillis concurs, "The Alien is Giger's baby, and he was calling to find out what we planned. After that we stayed in contact and he faxed through drawings and ideas that proved very helpful when

we were deciding how the Alien was going to develop. We all seemed to be on the same wavelength in terms of the direction in which we were taking the character."

One example of this is the decision to dispense with the long extensions of bone that had adorned the Alien's back

ADDITION ON GIGER'S INPUT

“Giger’s main influence on us was through his work on ALIEN. We really wanted to go back to his original paintings and designs, which hadn’t been fully realized.”

in the first two films. Woodruff and Gillis made the decision to remove the “tailpipes” for practical reasons, because with the Alien on all fours, they interfered with the movement of the head. The day they made this decision they received another call from Giger. “He called to say that he hoped we’d get rid of the tailpipes. He’d just put them there to break up the human form of the suit and had never liked them. It was a very welcome coincidence.”

The suits for ALIEN 3, which were worn by Woodruff, were created absolutely skin-tight to prevent any wrinkles or bulges that might betray their foam latex origins. For the same reason, there were no zippers or flaps on the body section, which meant that Woodruff would sometimes go up to 10 hours at a stretch without being able to relieve himself. Woodruff, a veteran suit performer, accepted the hardship as an essential part of ADI’s effort to create a truly classic screen monster.

The scenes where the Alien rampages through the flaming prison complex were among the most difficult that Woodruff had to perform. Gillis recalls, “They laid down a lot of flame bars, and at times it got so hot that the slime was evaporating right off Tom’s suit. A couple of times we had to call a stop and pour cold water over him to stop the heat from penetrating. To supplement the suit, a striking head with the inner jaw operated by a pneumatic ram was created for close ups of the Alien’s attack on its victims, while the task of creating an Alien that could stand up to a wider camera angle fell to the special effects experts at Boss Film Studios, under the supervision of four-time Oscar winner Richard Edlund.

Woodruff and Gillis created a mould for a 40-inch (1/8th scale) Alien rod puppet, which was cast in foam at Boss. An armature made from bicycle chain was installed to provide directional, easily controlled movement for each limb. Laine Liska, a former stop-motion animator, was chosen as lead puppeteer because of his experience at creating life-like



Bill Hedge, one of the Boss Film puppeteers, introduces actress Sigourney Weaver to the miniature version of Ripley’s newest Alien antagonist.

movement. Two weeks of intensive testing allowed Liska to determine the best arrangement to operate the puppet.

“We initially tried it with the body of the Alien on motion control, but it moved more like a bunny rabbit than an alien,” explains Liska. “It really started working when we started doing everything by hand, including running the puppet along a ramp so it covered distance as it moved.”

Liska adds, “Most of the time there were four of us working the puppet—one person on the front legs, another on the back legs, another operating the tail and me on the head and the torso. For the upside down shots of the Alien on the ceiling we had to have a person for each limb, so there were six of us clustered around this little puppet, all moving as fast as we could.”

To create longer shots of the Alien in motion, the puppeteers sat in a dolly, which

was pushed along as they ran the Alien down an adjacent platform. “The puppet worked best when we were going as fast as the guys pushing us could run, because that’s when we started to get those slight imperfections that are part of nature,” says Liska.

When it came to deciding precisely how the Alien would move through any given scene there was no shortage of suggestions from Fincher. “He suggested a lot of different animals for us to copy, often in combination because he wanted it to move like something from another world,” recalls Liska. “He wanted the running to be very predatory, very cougar-like and at other times he wanted it to move more spidery, almost like an insect.”

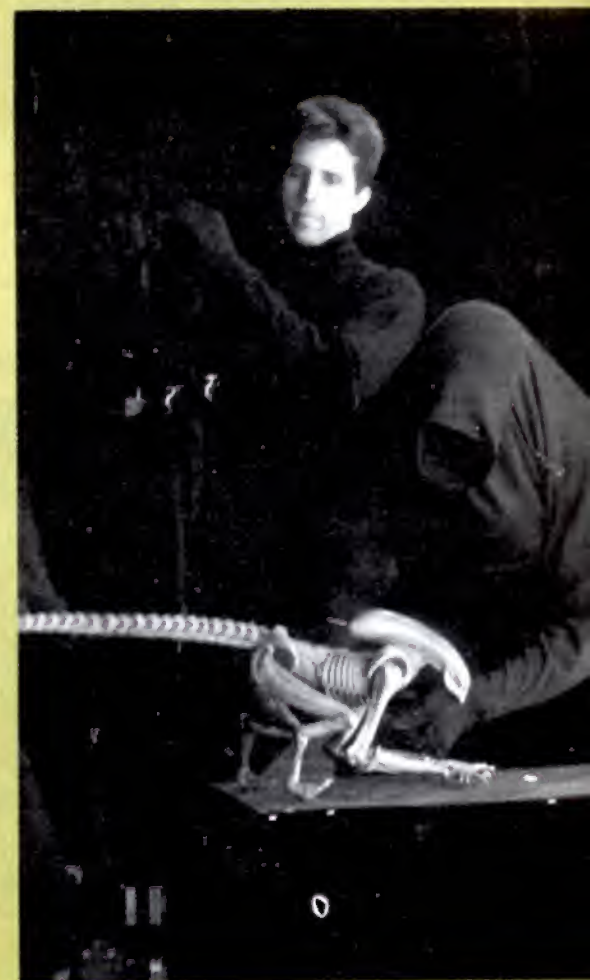
“One of the advantages of doing it with puppetry is that we were able to create lots of versions in the same set-up, where with CGI and stop-motion you’re more restricted to a

single finished product. We sometimes did as many as 60-70 takes of a single scene, with Fincher directing the puppet just like it was an actor.”

An instant playback system allowed the puppeteers and the director to see how effectively the puppet was integrated into the live action which had already been shot. Liska explains, “We double exposed the puppet over the principal photography to give us a feeling for how it was moving through a scene, how fast it was going and whether it was floating or in contact with the surfaces around it. We could tell right away whether it was locked in and make immediate adjustments if it wasn’t.”

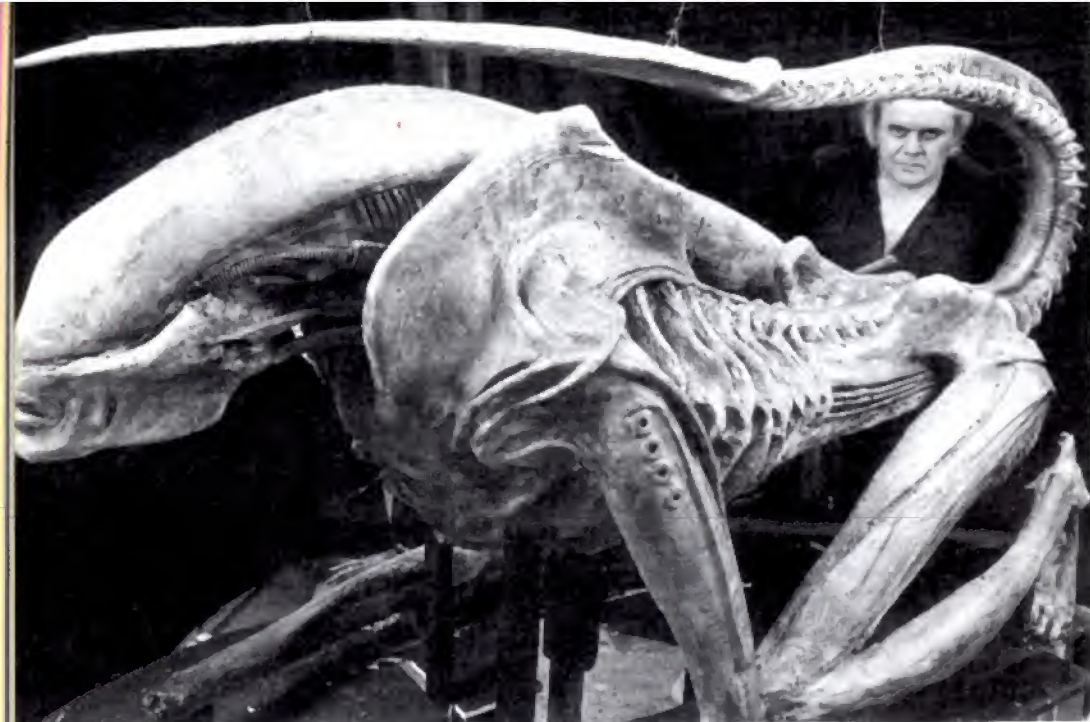
When Fincher had a version he was happy with the rods were removed by rotoscoping and the puppet was optically composited to the scene. Digital effects supervisor Jim Rygiel then used computers to add the shadows that place the Alien firmly within the scene. Woodruff is particularly pleased with the end result. “I think we came very close to Giger’s original designs in terms of making the Alien look real,” he enthuses. “And together with Boss Film we were able to make it act real.” □

Puppeteers often wore black velvet to make the Alien easier to roto-scope into the final composite.



GIGER VIA FAX TO FINCHER

“I am incessantly working out the details of ALIEN 3, which I do not want to withhold from you. Although I am not asked to go on with my work, please accept my design.”



Above: Giger's quadruped ALIEN 3 sculpture. Below: Boss Films' post-production puppet. ADI calls the similarity of design a "welcome coincidence."



were dropped. Fincher and crew tried many techniques, including CGI enhancement by Richard Edlund's Boss Film, until what ended up on screen was only a quick cut.

In a letter to 20th Century-Fox, Giger's agent, Leslie Barany, stated, "That not all of Giger's ideas were implemented in the final film was their, perhaps mistaken, decision.

Equally, [it was] their decision not to take advantage of Giger's availability to work on-set with the Visual Effects team, as it was specified by the contract. It was, perhaps, for these reasons that much of Messrs. Woodruff and Gillis's design 'improvements' and effects had to be trashed and that Mr. Woodruff himself had to slip into the Alien suit to

bring it to life, in spite of all the early assertions that it would be an unacceptable solution."

Noted Fincher: "We did what we had time to do, and we had a lot more interesting ideas that we would have liked to do...and we ran out of money. Unfortunately, when you have no prep time you spend a lot of money on stuff that never gets shot or does get shot and isn't properly thought out. It never moved quite as quickly as I wanted it to. But we wanted it to be fast and big and powerful and *dumb*." (This, of course, runs contrary to what Fincher had told Giger via fax: "The creature is a...mixture of intelligence, curiosity, and viciousness.")

A

fter 18 months, the film finally neared its summer 1992 theatrical release

date. When Fox in Geneva organized a screening for Giger's friends and co-workers, the artist was horrified by the credit he saw on the screen, which was not the one specified in his contract. "In the contract it states exactly how I should be credited, and this was a mistake," Giger says regretfully. "They break the contract because they're saying in

the movie that it's only 'original design by Giger' and not ALIEN 3, so it looks like I didn't work on it."

Immediately a letter was written to Fox, Geneva, who made no attempt to clear up the matter with Fox, L.A. Their comment was: "All press materials and posters have already been produced, so it would be too late for changes now." Then, after a second screening for the press on September 3, 1992, Giger realized that his name was also missing from the movie's end credits.

As a way of correcting the mistake, Fox at first suggested purchasing trade ads, congratulating Giger's work on ALIEN 3—a suggestion Giger rejected. Later, on the grounds that they valued their relationship with the temperamental artist, the studio relented, promising to go back and make expensive changes to the master negative of the film, even though the prints had already been shipped. Credits on the laserdisk and videocassette copies now reads: "Original Alien Design by H.R. Giger," with the additional "Alien 3 Creature Design by H.R. Giger." His credit lies between the line mentioning Edlund for "Visual Effects", and Gillis and Woodruff for "Alien Effects."

But it was too late to correct the impression left with those who had seen the film in theatres. "I got a lot of publicity on the first movie, but when ALIEN 3 was here, I remarked that nobody made any interviews with me," Giger says. "It was then I realized that I was not in the film as ALIEN 3 designer! Mr. Fincher never gave me any credit. That did not just happen; it was made to happen. I never heard from the man responsible, and I don't know why he did it."

Even press releases limited Giger's involvement to the con-

Giger's maquette of the abandoned version of the newborn "Bambi-burster," so called because of its awkward stance.



GIGER

BIOMECHANICAL WATERING HOLE

The Giger Bar puts you in the artist's work.

By Les Paul Robley

The Giger Bar, located in the artist's hometown of Chur (pronounced 'Koor'), sits unobtrusively below the Alps in the unlikely domain of the Kalchbuhl Center Mall. Opened in February 1992, the "bar of the fantastique" was built by city architect Thomas Domenig, based on furniture designed by Giger himself. Stepping inside for a drink is akin to hopping aboard the Alien mothership: customers sit in Baron Harkonnen-type chairs (from Alexander Jodorowsky's unproduced version of DUNE) which look imposing but are strangely comfortable; white death masks spy on drinkers from beneath the counter; silkscreens of famous Giger landscapes rest beneath clear tabletops; ALIEN lithos adorn

the high walls, and a maze of hieroglyphic aluminum floor plates greet each visitor's step.

The idea stemmed from a four-level version constructed in Japan by fans of the artist in 1988. "The Japanese are fans of fantastique art," Giger says. "The Vienna School of Fantastique Art is very well-known in Japan. They have a special sense for cruelty I'm horrified about. They asked me what I would like, and I said, 'A bar...Why not a bar!' And as soon as I got home they built something almost overnight."

Giger wasn't satisfied with the Tokyo version due to the inadequate rendering of his designs, which he termed, "wet spaghetti," adding, "I was horrified at first. I've never seen it finished. They made everything smaller and changed the dimensions to small uncomfort-

The Giger Bar is not a museum with the artist's paintings adorning the walls; rather, the very decor of the bar itself is the artwork.



Alien designer H.R. Giger stands in the entrance of the Swiss bar-restaurant that bears his name. Giger would like to design a similar venue in New York.

able seats. I've heard a lot of mafia [Yakuza] go there because it's a labyrinth. I prefer the one in Chur because everything is my stuff."

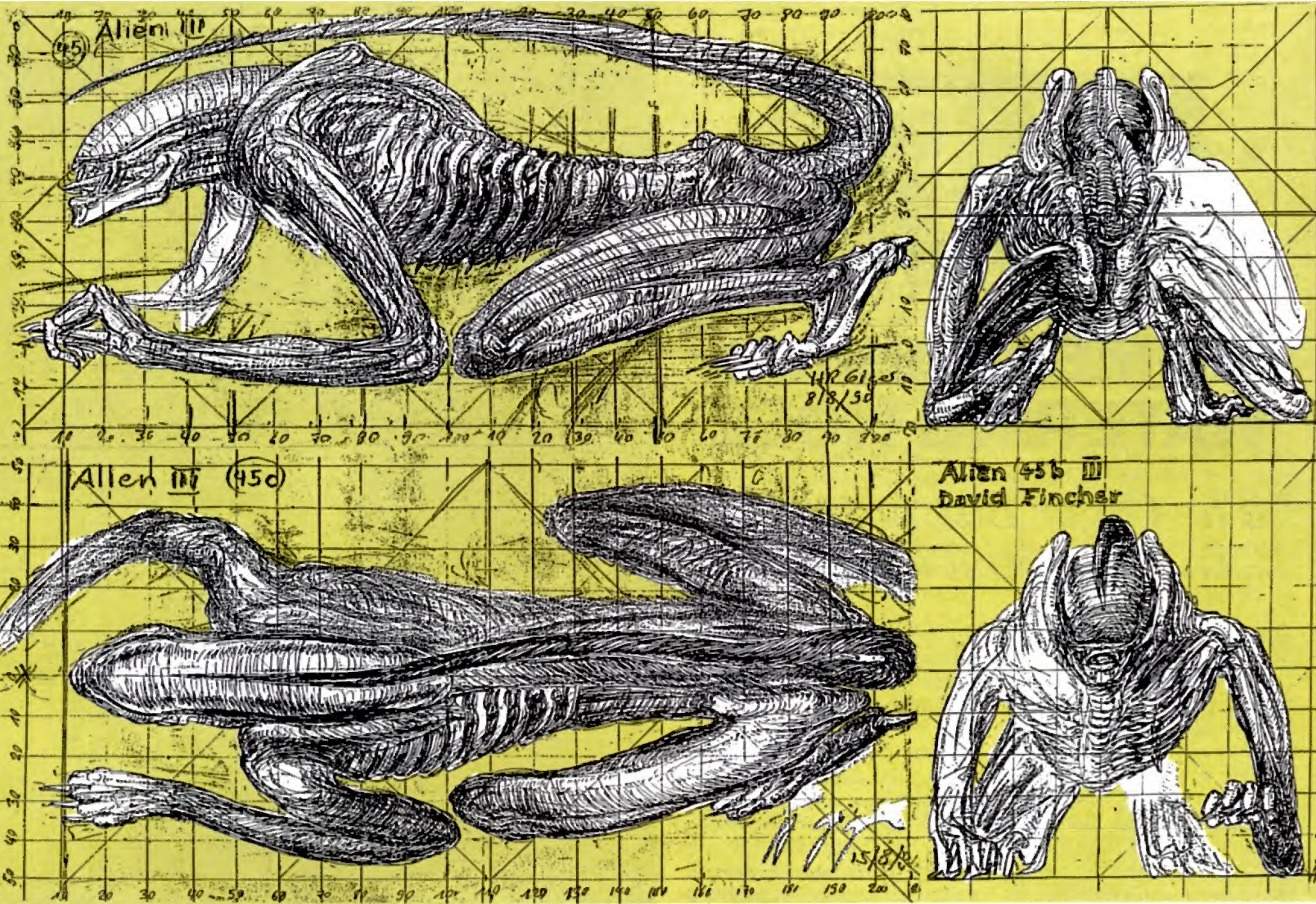
Although Giger has no financial interest in the restaurant-bar in Switzerland, he does have a personal interest. "I did it to realize some new designs," he says. "Herr Domenig, an old friend who's an architect in Chur, was building a shopping complex, and there was a place for a coffee shop. So, we planned this bar. I didn't take money—I worked free—but now I have the bar the way I want it. Unlike ALIEN 3 and the movies I've been involved with in general, this Giger Bar is exactly as I designed it, and the final execution has made me very happy. It's not at all like the Tokyo bar where, again, others interpreted my designs very freely. The light is not okay and several things are not perfect, but the inside looks

better than the one in Tokyo. People like it very much."

Giger would like to design a similar club in New York City, if he would be able to realize it the way he would like. "Sex and death for me are so integrated," he adds, concerning erotic art and his preoccupation with dead babies and phallic symbols. "I'm mystified why other people aren't doing it. That's a very important part of life: death." □

Even the rest room bears the unmistakable imprint of the artist.





"We need to see it in 3 dimensions...but barring any problems, I'd say you're finished," wrote Fincher of Giger's design, before the production cut off all contact.

text of the first film. The 20-minute American promotional films, sent to Giger by his agent, gave the impression that he had worked only on ALIEN. *Cinefantastique* managed to secure an interview through European correspondent Jan Doense, but when competitor *Fangoria* asked to question Giger on the making of ALIEN 3, they were told by Fox's publicity department that the artist was not involved. Giger quickly sent a fax pleading: "Tell me this isn't true?"

Meanwhile, the ADI personnel gave a series of interviews [see sidebar] that minimized Giger's ALIEN 3 contribution by praising him only as the Alien creator while claiming that their version was "truer" to his original design paintings than the suit he himself had constructed on ALIEN. Giger considers this claim "bizarre." (It is rendered even more bizarre when one observes the similarity between Giger's ALIEN 3 designs and the four-legged rod puppet added in

post-production by Boss Film. Though details like the saxophone-type valves in the skin were omitted, Giger's basic structural ideas were clearly incorporated. This is not a better realized version of the old alien but a new creature redesigned by its creator.)

The artist was additionally insulted by a paid advertisement in *Cinefex*, wherein Fincher congratulated the magazine's coverage and "all who made it necessary—and possible." He then mentioned the main individuals responsible for the special effects—that is, everyone except Giger, even though his Alien was pictured on the page. Fincher declined comment on this.

Giger's lawyers had all this time been fighting a costly legal battle with Fox, who were trying to foist off a very simple work-for-hire contract on the artist, contrary to the agreements made on July 28.

"You proceed on the deal memo, and then once the work is done and in their hands, they send you the contract," according to Barany. "From day one, Giger had said that basically he wanted the same contract he had on ALIEN. We fought for months on that, and it involved legal costs and merchandising royalties. At one point, they had the audacity to say that they don't give merchandising points to 'craftsmen.'"

Giger finally won the merchandising royalties after accruing \$9,000 in legal fees, which the studio refused to reimburse. When Fox sent a film crew for a behind-the-scenes ALIEN 3 documentary, Giger refused to be interviewed until the company finally sent a check for the legal expenses.

But the final blow occurred when the Academy overlooked Giger's contribution to the film in last February's Oscar nominations for Best Visual Effects. Even though his screen credit for ALIEN had not included the

word "effects", Giger was one of the recipients in the category in 1980, because director Ridley Scott had the good judgment to include his name along with nominees Carlo Rambaldi and Richard Johnson. Giger and his lawyers contended that, because he was engaged under the same contract and for the same purposes on ALIEN 3, then it seemed only logical that he again be nominated.

In a letter to the Academy's Visual Effects Committee, Barany made the omission sound like part of a conspiracy: "In all likelihood, the members of the Committee were no more aware of Giger's involvement in ALIEN 3 than the general movie-going public.... You have read no interviews with Giger, seen no published sketches, photos or accounts of his work in the numerous magazines that would normally be very interested in such coverage. As we were later told, *no one knew.*"

The effects committee's re-

FINCHER VIA FAX TO GIGER

“I require no convincing about the full-grown Alien 3 monster. I think it’s wonderful. Mssrs. Gillis and Woodruff are waiting for your maquettes before they begin their work.”

sponse was that they are not responsible for adding names; it was up to the production company or the director to decide which people should be nominated. The fact that Giger did not actually work on the set mattered not at all, but unless he worked directly on the effects, and not strictly in the capacity of a production designer, he would not have been eligible anyway.

Chapter 22 of the Academy’s Special Rules for the Visual Effects Award states: “The producers of the films selected for award consideration (or their designers) shall be requested to provide the committee with: the names and titles of the primary individuals—not to exceed four in number—directly involved with, and principally responsible for, the visual effects achieved and a description of their contributions. Additional names will not be considered...Eligibility of the contributor(s) to the achievement, for nomination purposes, shall be determined by the Visual Effects Award Rules Committee.”

Giger sent Bonnie Bogin, senior litigation counsel for 20th Century-Fox, a hand-written fax stating: “As you know, I got an Oscar for ALIEN in the category of visual effects....I am still the creator of all the creatures, and I worked very hard on ALIEN 3...[yet] 20th Century-Fox denies intentionally my contribution to the visual effects....I am absolutely convinced that 20th Century-Fox and/or the ALIEN 3 team planned from the beginning to use me as co-operator, but to prevent in all ways that I receive appropriate recognition, including this nomination.”

Giger was so upset that at one point he sent Academy president Karl Malden a fax with this closing comment: “I am under the strong impres-

sion that my contribution to the visual effects of the nominated movie has been intentionally suppressed,” signing the letter with a large black pentagram.

Less than two weeks before the Academy Awards, Fox’s legal department responded with a letter pointing out that studios are precluded from submitting nominees in the effects category directly to the Academy. “We understand that David Fincher, the director of ALIEN 3, prepared the nomination,” the letter stated. “It seems clear that Mr. Fincher was aware of both your client’s contribution to the Picture, along with the contributions of other design and special effects participants...the Director appears to have included in the Visual Effects nominations only those artists whose work directly produced the logic-defying illusion that inanimate objects—objects that are nothing more than plastic, foam, metal and wires—actually live, breathe, think and feel in the context of the Picture...please note that Fox had no input into this nomination, that this nomination occurred outside of Fox’s control, and Fox does not even have a right under the circumstances to request Mr. Giger’s inclusion.”

Barany answered back with the following fax (briefly stated): “You are right. You cannot speak for Mr. Fincher. It is high time that Mr. Fincher spoke for himself... Mr. Fincher owes Giger, the Academy and the Visual Effects community an explanation for the bizarre omission of [Giger’s name]... The denial of Giger’s Academy Award nomination is just the last example of the effort to totally erase his relationship to ALIEN 3.”

Although efforts to include Giger’s name among the nominees continued up to the day before the awards show, in the



According to Giger’s liner notes for the ALIEN laserdisk, director Ridley Scott “inspired me to realize my vision exactly the way I had imagined it....For this reason, my first film experience was also my most satisfying one.”



GIGER

DARK SEED

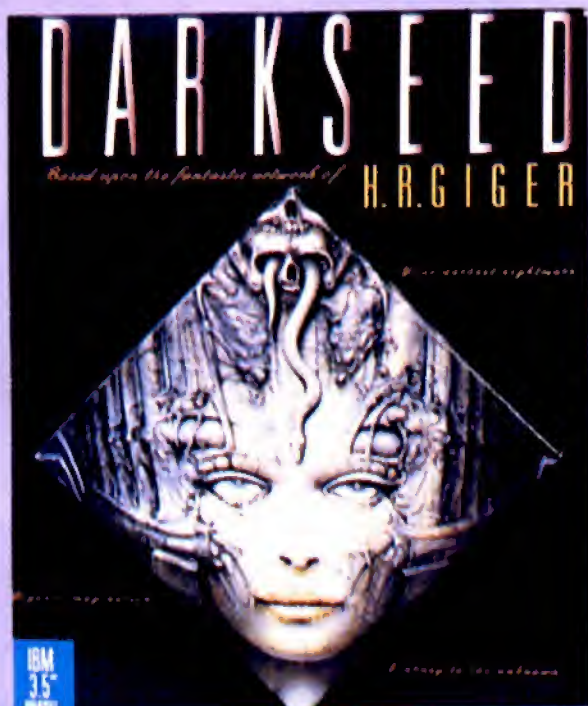
The biomechanical computer game.

By Les Paul
Robley

Dark Seed is a computer game developed by Cyberdreams Entertainment Software, using art by H. R. Giger. The game was produced by Patrick Ketchum, former president of Sullivan-Bluth Interactive Media—the team responsible for the coin-operated *Dragon's Lair* and *Space Ace* arcade games.

Giger became involved in the project when Cyberdreams asked to incorporate his artwork into a science-fiction/fantasy adventure for home computers. After stipulating that only high resolution graphics be used, he entered into an exclusive agreement whereby Cyberdreams' artists scanned his paintings into the computer, then cut and pasted them to construct a biomechanical world. Approximately 50% of the game consists of Giger's art, which was not used for the normal world.

When the project was near completion, Cyberdreams made a trip to Switzerland to



show the work to Giger and solicit his input. The artist offered advice which took Cyberdreams an additional six months to incorporate into the final version of the game.

The player controls a character by the name of Mike Dawson, a sci-fi writer who has just purchased an old Victorian mansion on the outskirts of a sleepy town called Woodland Hills (Cyberdreams' home base). During a nightmare, evil biomechanical creatures implant an embryo into Dawson's

head. He has three days to discover this, or the embryo will hatch and replace him. *Dark Seed* challenges the player to enter the "Gigeresque" world, fight the biomechanical creatures, and prevent them from destroying humanity.

Made for IBM, Macintosh and Amiga computer platforms, *Dark Seed* targets an older audience, rather than the dedicated video game system users. Incorporating stunning color graphics, the game features realistic voices, music, and sound-effects,

with over 1,000 frames of real-time animation and more than 60 locations to explore. The three-dimensional packaging by Bright & Associates utilizes Giger's *Li II* painting on the cover. The game won the Software Publisher Association's 1993 "Codie" award for Best Role-Playing Game, vanquishing such biggies as LucasArts, MicroProse, and Sierra On-Line. *Dark Seed II*, featuring more diabolical art from H.R. Giger, will be available later this year. □

For the home computer game *Dark Seed*, Cyberdreams scanned such Giger artwork as "Li II," "N.Y. City III," and "Homage a Bocklin" into the computer, in order to create a nightmarish world filled with biomechanical monsters.



end they proved futile. In any case, *DEATH BECOMES HER* received the Best Visual Effects award that year.

Despite his David-and-Goliath battle, what does the father of the *Alien* think of the direction the franchise has taken? "I like it," Giger admits. "The critics said it's terrible, but I think it's okay. I like the *Alien* head very much; that was nicely done, but not the neck. Also, I liked the claustrophobic feeling and the quick cutting. The *Alien* is better than in the second film. In the second, they changed the *Alien*, and finally, in the last one, they brought it back to my original design."

Like many reviewers, Giger was not satisfied with the ending, but his objections were more technical than aesthetic. "[Ripley] should go with the camera backwards. She gets smaller but never ends in the molten fire. The thing I don't like really is when [the alien] opened its mouth and the silly tongue comes out. I never liked this tongue. I always wanted to eliminate it, but Ridley Scott wanted it. It was okay in his movie because it [shot out]. But in the third it comes out slowly like false teeth. I made a very long tongue like a sword and the *Alien*'s mouth should look beautiful. With the monks this time there's an erotic fascination, and when it kisses them, you only see the mouth close-up. Then the tongue comes and you only see blood running..."

Fincher said of his work with the *Alien*'s mouth: "We definitely made it totally asexual, although we did give it Michelle Pfeiffer's lips. That's what they're based on. It always had these little thin lips, and I said to Giger, let's make it a woman when it comes right up to Ripley. So it has these big, luscious collagen lips."

ALIEN 3 is not the first time Giger has had trouble with legalities. Many post-*ALIEN* films have "borrowed" his biomechanical look without giving him the credit or money he deserves. At first he was flattered, but now it upsets him.



Fincher: "If this creature loped through the halls of ALIEN 3, we would have no choice but to accept that a new life form had been found to play the monster."

"Sometimes the [rip-offs] look even better than I design," he laughs. "But when people add their own ideas it looks more horrible than people who just copy my work." One Dutch forger even tried to make a fake of his famous *Necronom IV* painting, the one which inspired ALIEN.

"They tried to sell it in Zurich at an auction for 18,000 Swiss Francs (\$13,500). It was already in the catalog, but the measurements were wrong. The gallery alerted me. At first I didn't do anything, but the police came and took it away. I had a case, but nothing happened to them. I got the painting, so now I can sign it myself and give it back to the market," he jokes.

Despite his disappointing cinematic experiences since ALIEN, Giger still holds some hope for the medium. "I have no illusions about Hollywood and the movie-making process anymore, but I'd still like to work in movies, preferably with a challenging concept and a

quality director like Ridley Scott, David Cronenberg, or David Lynch," he remarks.

Upcoming film projects include Giger's own property, "The Mystery of San Gottardo," which Giger describes as a unique love story. "It is about a man and his love for a freak of nature, Armbeinda, which is really a sentient limb combining an arm and a leg. It is the further development of a recurring image in my work over the last thirty years." The concept stems from a 1963 creation called "The Beggar," his very first sketch, featuring a leg and an arm holding a hat. Giger made several drawings of this reduced human being, releasing it in the form of a French comic book in 1990. The story concerns a race of biomechanoids created by a military organization. The premise: your arms and legs are slaves that do your bidding, but what if they had a mind of their own? Ink drawings in the comic depict the disembodied parts attacking their creator (Giger's

self-portrait) in the San Gottardo border tunnel which links Switzerland with Italy. He is currently seeking financial backing for the horror project.

Giger would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with horror novelist and producer-director Clive Barker on a film. "He liked the idea and did a very nice introduction to my new *Necronomicon*, but he is very busy," Giger laments.

Bill Malone's once enthusiastic "The Mirror" project seems now dead and buried for good. There was not enough money to see it done properly, and in Giger's opinion, without suitable financial backing, it's probably just as well. Universal's THE TOURIST, at one time to be helmed by Brian Gibson, is likewise officially buried.

Also planned is a new documentary slated for October release on cable or home video, entitled BROTHER TO SHADOWS: THE ALIEN WORLD OF H.R. GIGER. Meanwhile, Giger's *Alien 3 Design Book*

has been abandoned by Dark Horse Comics, publishers of the Fox-licensed *Alien* comic book series; instead, ARh+ Publications hopes to release it in the near future.

Finally, looking back on the whole ALIEN 3 fiasco, is it possible to say that any good came out of it for the artist who created the Alien? According to Barany, "We managed to insist on the merchandising royalties again, and one of the jokes to this day is—whenever Giger received a royalty check, we knew that within a week we'd get a request for something. He has gotten the highest royalty payments he ever received on ALIEN. We always thought they were fudging the numbers. We think that with this new ALIEN 3 contract it may have put that on a good track." □

Additional material provided by Jan Doense and Mark Burman. H. R. Giger may be reached through agent Leslie Barany at (212) 627-8488.


Miskatonic

By Bruce G.
Hallenbeck

"What's your blood-type, Bruce?" was the first thing that Jeffrey Combs said to me on the telephone. When I told him I didn't know, he said quietly, "I'm sure we can find out."

That's the kind of guy Combs is, maintaining a sense of humor about having become a horror star. Other actors work consistently in the genre—Julian Sands, Robert Englund, Bruce Campbell, to name a few—but Combs may come closest to being an old-fashioned genre specialist in the manner of Karloff, Lugosi, Cushing, and Lee. Whether digging up old friends in *RE-ANIMATOR* or playing against type as the heroic *DR. MORDRID*, the actor invests each of his roles with a classic theatrical flair, suggesting that he has inherited the mantle of the recently departed Vincent Price, along with a resemblance to the late Ralph Bates (*DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE*).

Although he seems more like a New York theatrical type than a California boy, Combs was actually born and brought up in the Golden State,



Above: Combs poses as his most famous character, Herbert West, along with Kathleen Kinmont as the titular *BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR*. Right: West and his assistant (Bruce Abbott) construct the bride.

FFREY COMBS

method actor delves beyond RE-ANIMATOR.

halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles. "I didn't really grow up around the movie business," Combs explains. "L.A. is different from the rest of California. Where I grew up was rural, small town, quiet. It could have been in Ohio or New York. It could have been anywhere."

Combs very first screen appearance came in 1981 with a one-day job on *WHOSE LIFE IS IT ANYWAY?* ("I had a little scene with John Cassavetes. He was a wonderful guy.") Many fans may not be aware that Combs also played a small role opposite Steve Martin in *THE MAN WITH TWO BRAINS* (1983). And wouldn't you know he was a doctor in that, too, assisting Martin in his operation on Kathleen Turner. "I think I'm one of the few people who can say that I shaved Kathleen Turner, but not where you'd think," Combs laughs.

As is obvious from his screen performances, Combs is a thoroughly trained stage performer. "I went to a lot of theatre schools, got a lot of training, did a lot of repertory where you do a different play every night. I took a lot of voice, movement, and acting classes. I did a lot of rep after I got out of school: in San Diego, the Mark Taper Forum, South Coast Repertory—just the whole theatre circuit."

In fact, Combs was in a play in Los Angeles when he got the part of Herbert West in the first *RE-ANIMATOR* (1985). "The casting director saw me and said, 'Hey, you want to come in and read for this?' At the time, you have to realize that this was not *RE-ANIMATOR* as we know it. This was *RE-ANIMATOR* with a small 'R.' So I went in and auditioned for Stuart [Gordon]. He liked me, and I got called back to

“Villains are more interesting, as Herbert West proves, Here’s a guy we admire because, despite what we find disgusting about him, at least he doesn’t give in.”



Combs considers *FROM BEYOND*, his second foray into Lovecraftian territory with director Stuart Gordon, an effort unbalanced in favor of special effects.

read for the producer [Brian Yuzna]. The rest is splatter history."

Interestingly enough, Combs had not been at all familiar with Lovecraft's work before he did *RE-ANIMATOR*—although that isn't what he told the producers. "They would say, 'You know, this movie's based on H.P. Lovecraft,' and like any actor who wants a job, I said, 'Oh! Ah, sure!' I'd heard the name, but I didn't really

know his writings at all. But I went out and read quite a bit of it after that."

Combs had mixed emotions about his first experience with the 'splatter' genre. "I went through some quandaries," he admits. "I wondered, 'What is this?' Actually, when I first read the script for *RE-ANIMATOR*, I thought, 'Oh, god, this is quite strong. But I'll do it, because work is work, and no one will ever see it, anyway.' How

wrong can you be?"

Combs says that what he tried to do in *RE-ANIMATOR* was bring "back some of that style. All of those guys in the early horror films were stage-based. That's where that kind of grand attitude comes from—a little larger than life. A lot of actors don't have that sort of base. They just come in and don't kick it in the rear. It's very flattering to be compared to people like Vincent Price, Peter Cushing, and all those great actors."

Combs enjoys working with director Stuart Gordon because of Gordon's stage background. "He understands the process," Combs explains. "A lot of film directors don't really know how to talk to actors other than to say, 'Stand there,' or 'Can you say it louder and faster?' Stuart really knows how to get the detail. He can really base it in honest-to-goodness motivations and reality. Although it's fantastical, he likes to base it in fact. He's a great guy. We have a lot of good laughs."

Combs feels that his second Lovecraft film, *FROM BEYOND*, suffered from too many cuts—and not just those mandated by the MPAA to conform to an R-rating. "There were things cut out of it that shouldn't have been cut," Combs explains. "Little character bits. But it was also cut by the Ratings Board, and if you've seen the film you can understand why. It was pretty strong. But I felt like the balance was lost on that movie. It became too strongly oriented toward the effects. Stuart always has this great balance between the effects and the characters, but this got a little out of whack."

Combs has much higher praise for Gordon's version of *THE PIT AND THE PENDU-*



Combs shares a non-effects scene with RE-ANIMATOR co-star Barbara Crampton. "Character bits were cut out that shouldn't have been," he says.

LUM. "It's quite good," the actor enthuses. "For me, it's Stuart getting back to his original style. It's similar in style to RE-ANIMATOR. There's the humor, and there's the shock value there." Combs also feels that BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR, directed by Brian Yuzna, is at least as good as its predecessor. "There's a great sense of style," he says, "and if you can—pardon the pun—inject a little bit of humor into it, you can lift it beyond the genre."

When asked about the difference in the directing style of Yuzna and Gordon, Combs is diplomatic. "They're apples and oranges. Brian is a very good director. He has a good eye, a very clear concept of what he wants, and we have a good working relationship. He knows how to get coverage; he knows how to get the look and feel of the atmosphere that he wants. He knows that a strong story is very important. Of course, all this is true with Stuart, too, but they both have their strengths. I enjoy working with both of them. I wish they'd work together again."

Combs may get his wish, as Yuzna hopes to reassemble the original RE-ANIMATOR creative team for a second sequel, to be entitled either BEYOND RE-ANIMATOR or HOUSE OF RE-ANIMATOR. "What he would like to do is get Stuart Gordon back on board as director, Dennis Paoli back on board as screenwriter, myself, and hopefully Bruce [Abbott] and convey it that way—that the old magic is

back. It would be nice if all of that works out."

The genre tag brought by recognition from the RE-ANIMATOR films hasn't always provided the choicest roles or the most prestigious productions. Along the way, Combs has done a couple of flicks for ubiquitous low-budget movie-maker Fred Olen Ray. "I went in and met Fred," Combs recalls. "He said he had this project called CYCLONE. There wasn't a script yet, but would I be interested? I said sure. Actors like to work. Well...it's not that great of a movie, but I enjoyed working with Fred."

"THE PHANTOM EMPIRE is a whole story in itself," Combs adds. "He called me and said, 'Look, I'm financing this movie myself, and the only way I can do it is to make it in a week!' I said, 'A week?!' He said, 'Yeah!' I thought about it and thought it might be a hoot. He did it. He made a movie in a week. He lived up to his motto of 'Six days, no waiting.' Those movies are kind of fun to watch in their own light, stupid way."

Many of the actor's other films have done little to advance his career beyond his established image, even if only because they haven't been seen. PULSEPOUNDERS, a Lovecraftian trilogy, fell into distribution limbo due to "legal bugaboos" when Charles Band's Empire Pictures went out of business, although Combs hopes it may some day come out on video. ROBOT JOX, Stuart Gordon's failed at-

"I enjoy the genre, but I've always prided myself on being versatile. Yet, Hollywood likes to pigeonhole you as soon as they can, so it's a bit of a battle."

tempt at delivering a science-fiction action spectacular on a Charles Band budget, faced a similar fate, until it eventually received a brief theatrical release.

More recently, Combs has appeared in films for Band's new company, Full Moon Entertainment. In TRANCERS II (1991), he was reduced to playing a supporting villain alongside Martine Beswick (ironically, Bates' SISTER HYDE co-star), while Richard Lynch got the lead heavy role. One year later, however, Combs got to play the title character in DR. MORDRID, a considerable change of pace from his Herbert West persona.

"It borrows heavily from DR. STRANGE," Combs admits. "It was a very good experience. I enjoyed making that movie, but I just wish that I had been a little bit more involved in the creation of the character. Although I had been talking with Charlie [Band] for quite awhile, I never got to look at a script, basically, until we were about ready to go. I wish that I had, because I would have liked to have had the character be a little bit more active. He could

have used a little more humor. I found myself just standing around reacting to what everybody else was doing, as opposed to instigating things myself. That's a very difficult thing to sustain as an actor, because 'actor' implies acting—to act, be active. Just to be reacting is not the same thing. There is talk of a second one. I told Charlie, 'I just hope I'll be a little more involved, instead of standing on the sidelines a lot.' He said, 'Oh, yeah, we'll shoot you out a canon.'"

This kind of weakness on the part of protagonists is what makes the antagonists often more memorable. "Villains are always more interesting to play," Combs opines, "as Herbert West proves. When you think back on movies like DIE HARD, you always think of the bad guys, because they have something very strong and active to play."

Although Combs characterizes his most famous role as a villain, he admits that, as with Peter Cushing's Baron Frankenstein, there is a definite appeal to Herbert West. "He's a fascinating character," the actor states. "He's that sort of driven character that we are

Stuart Gordon (left) directs Combs (right) in THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM. "For me, it's Stuart getting back to his original style," says the actor.



all obsessed with. He's uncompromising—that's the way I think of it. We all compromise everyday in big and small ways. Here's a guy that we admire because, despite what we find disgusting about him, at least he doesn't give in. So we all appreciate that and root for it."

Despite his disappointment with the character, DR. MORDRID may have been the first step toward escaping the confines of low-budget villainy. Combs' most recent big-screen appearance was a scene-stealing turn last year in Stuart Gordon's *FORTRESS*, a relatively lavish science fiction prison breakout movie that proved a tremendous hit overseas if not at home. "I played a character named D-Day, sort of a frightened little ferret-like inmate, a retro-'60s kind of guy, who manages to stay out of everyone's way and survive in this hideous environment," he explains. "As the story unfolds, he turns out to be a techno-wiz and explosives expert, and he proceeds to help in a big way when Christopher Lambert devises a plan to break out. He saves the day, when it looks like all else has failed, and then dies—a heroic end. I was pleased with how it turned out. The role really builds and expands as the movie goes along."

After that Combs moved back into the horror realm, continuing his association with H.P. Lovecraft by actually playing the author in *NECRONOMICON* [see article on Page 8.] Combs calls the experience "very strange," adding, "I didn't look like myself after the incredible special effects makeup John Vulich did. The script altered him into a heroic self-sacrificing, shy, professorial, ragged-around-the-edges, puppy dog kind of guy who rises heroically to the occasion. Whereas the real Lovecraft was staid and stoic, it seems to me—a little humorless, at least in what I could glean from his pictures and writing."

Although Combs has carved himself a niche in science-fiction, fantasy, and horror, he still has a slightly uneasy feeling about his success in the field. "It's kind of a mixed blessing for an actor," he



Co-starring with Christopher Lambert (right), Combs played techno-wiz D-DAY (left) in Gordon's futuristic prison-escape movie, *FORTRESS*. "The role really builds and expands as the movie goes along," the actor enthuses.

opines. "I enjoy the genre, but you do this and they figure, 'Well, that is what he does.' It's sort of like going to a banquet—you're told you can only eat the sausage and that's all. But it's food; it's sustenance. I get the experience of being in front of the camera and getting the juices flowing, so the genre's been very good to me."

On the other hand, Combs laments, "I've always prided myself on being versatile and being able to do the classics and dramas and contemporary plays and just a plethora of styles. And yet, as far as Hollywood is concerned, they like to pigeonhole you as soon as they can. So it's been a bit of a

battle—fighting a windmill. But to put it into context, I'm working and have a bit of a following out there. Someone said to me early on that horror fans are very loyal, and I went, 'Yeah, right,' and filed it away. But it's proven to be time and time again quite true. They're avid."

Following his appearance as Lovecraft in *NECRONOMICON*, Combs has no definite plans at the moment, although his experience with *DR. MORDRID* has taught him that he'd like to be more involved in the development of his projects. "I'd like to direct, and I did send a script to Charlie Band awhile ago, but I don't know [if that

will happen]—it's easier said than done," he admits. In the meantime, "I'm an actor. You never know what could be next; you're constantly looking for some kind of project; you just keep your eyes and ears open and hope for the best."

Having branched out into science fiction and fantasy, Combs is no longer limited to low-budget splatter. Still, no matter how Combs may feel about typecasting, it seems that Fate—and the fans—have bestowed upon him the honor of being a premier genre actor for the '90s. □

Additional quotes provided by Jay Stevenson.

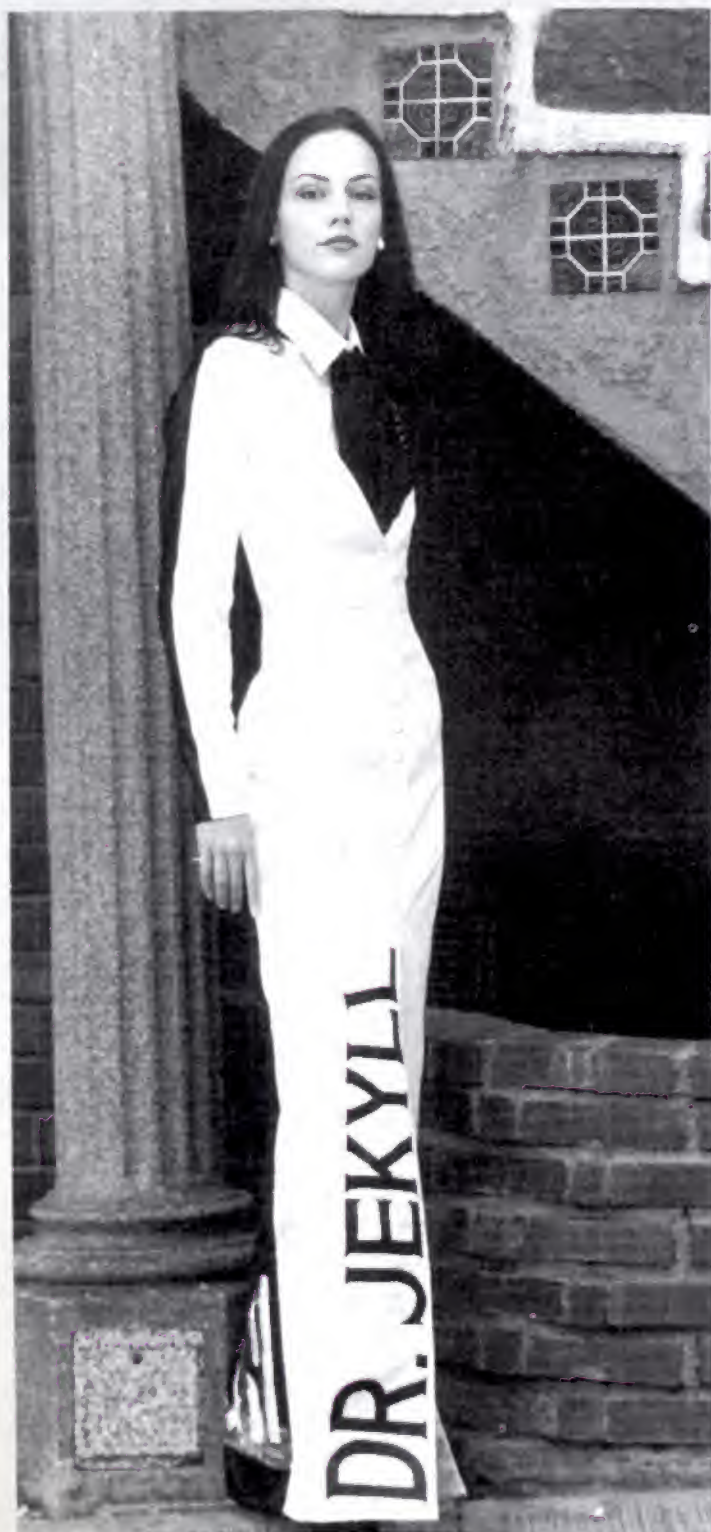
Havunt Couture

Some truly talented femmes model attire that is frighteningly fatale.

By Steve Biodrowski

It was something which could happen only in L.A., which is probably why it was in the "Only in L.A." column of the *Los Angeles Times*. At the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising's 13th Annual Debut Luncheon and Fashion Show, attended by such notables as designer Bob Mackie and then-mayor Tom Bradley, one of the dresses featured a drawing of PSYCHO's "blood-spattered shower scene," per the Times. School Chairwoman Mary Stephens seemed a bit embarrassed about having to account for the "drop-dead creation," stating, "We like to give our students an opportunity to express their creativity, even if they know that when they go to work they'll have to do salable clothing."

The work in question is that of Lisa Temming, whose series of eight also includes dresses inspired by THE BIRDS, THE MUMMY, DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, THE WOLFMAN, and THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN. Not surprisingly, the 21-year-old Bob Mackie Scholarship-winner is a long time devotee of *cinéfantastique*, which she inherited from her parents. "I grew up watching science fiction, because my dad likes that stuff," she recounts. "Then my dad would go to sleep, and my mom and I would stay up till



Lisa Temming models her own creation, inspired by DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE. "I actually bought a men's dress shirt, cut it up, and put it on the front. That dress was pretty basic in its shape. The details came from appliquéing."



Florina Kendrick, one of the vampire brides in Coppola's DRACULA, is equally alluring as the monster's mate, in the Bride of Frankenstein wedding gown.

“It’s supposed to be humorous, but a lot of people didn’t know what to think. They’d just make a face, and I could see their eyes saying, ‘She’s sick!’”

one o’clock in the morning watching old black-and-white horror films.”

Her mother encouraged her early artistic endeavors by teaching her to draw. “I started out doing really weird science fiction-type space outfits; now I like to use a lot of humor. It’s a small step from drawing people to designing wardrobe—you just have to put clothes on them—so it’s a kind of draw-

Debra Lamb (EVIL SPIRITS) encounters the Wolfman among the ruins of Errol Flynn’s former Hollywood estate, now Runyon Canyon Park.

ing-designing happy medium. I can do my cartoons and my designs all in one.”

The *magna cum laude* graduate decided on the horror motif for her collection because “I’d never really seen anyone do horror movies as a theme. A lot of people have done Gothic-inspired or Dracula-inspired themes but never taken from the actual genre. It was something that came naturally. I don’t usually do things that are so dark; everything’s usually light-hearted.”

Work for the June show began in September, and the graduating students took full advantage of the opportunity. “It’s our one chance to do whatever we want,” Temming relates. “Once we start working for someone else, we’ll have to conform to the company image. We’re given eight bodies, meaning we can make eight outfits: dresses, sportswear, or ensembles. I prefer dresses, because they provide a bigger canvas—I can get more on one dress than on five different pieces. They say we’re given total creative freedom, but the teachers try to tone us down, which I think is good, but there have been times when they’ve overstepped.”

Surprisingly, the gruesome nature of Temming’s collection faced few objections, although initial reactions suggested that some people were missing its satirical element. “It’s supposed to be humorous, but sometimes it’s hard for people to see that,” she admits. “A lot of people really didn’t know what to think about it. They’d just make a face, and I could see their eyes saying, ‘She’s sick!’ I was actually surprised that my teachers thought it was cool, even though they’re from an older generation. I think that happened because they have a sick sense of hu-





Lisa Blount (PRINCE OF DARKNESS) strikes a provocative pose as the Mummy. "There's 50 yards of elastic in that garment, hand-sewn," says Temming.



Left: TICKS star Rosalind Allen now menaced by birds. Right: TOMMY-KNOCKERS' beauty-in-a-beast suit, Karyn Malchus, in the dagger dress.

mor, also. That was very encouraging for me."

The initial concept was a little more generic, rather than specific to certain films. Two early designs made it into the series: sleek black evening gowns, one featuring a knife and the other a noose. "When I first thought of the horror theme, I wanted to make the noose dress, so I thought, 'What else can I do?' I drew about 60 ways to die: hit-and-run, drowning, burning, everything. Those died, although I would still like to make a few of them, to add to this collection later. Those two [knife and noose] I saved. I felt they were the strongest, and they worked well with the horror theme."

Having settled on designing outfits mainly suggesting specific films, Temming had to select images which were recognizable icons. "When I started, I had a FRIDAY THE 13TH dress, an AMITYVILLE HORROR dress, and others that got axed along the way because they didn't lend themselves to doing what I wanted or they wouldn't be identifiable," she explains. "After that, I felt I should do classic movies. That helped narrow my focus, and they all lent themselves to what I wanted to do. It was the point when everything comes together."

Getting the designs to work in three dimensions provided a series of challenges, such as finding a translucent shower curtain for the train of the PSYCHO dress. "The lady at Sears looked at me weird when I said it was for a dress," she laughs. "Then I went into the backyard and splattered red paint all over it—it was sick but fun! Painting the figure on front was my favorite thing, but it took a long time. I did it on a separate piece of fabric and attached it to the dress, in case I screwed up." THE BIRDS



Left: Hammer horror star Martine Beswicke slips her head into a noose. Right: ST:TNG's Cameron in sultry PSYCHO-inspired attire.



“I didn’t want to make costumes; I wanted to make dresses. They are very theatrical, but they are meant to be worn out to dinner and events, not for Halloween.”

dress utilized “the white doves used in wedding arrangements, which I painted black, because nobody makes black birds.” The noose dress required a trip to a horse tackle shop when the fashion design shops failed to provide a suitably impressive rope. “I wanted something that the audience could see from the runway; plus it had to hold the dress up. It’s actually a line that people lead their horses with—I took the bit off the end and tied it in a knot.”

Applying the knife blade to the next gown proved a bit tricky because the vinyl-like material did not lend itself to sewing, but the WOLFMAN dress turned out to be “fairly simple,” and the lupine figure was “like making a two-dimensional stuffed animal.” The Jekyll-Hyde outfit was more straightforward, except for cutting up a men’s dress shirt to use on the front. The BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN gown, however, “was technically the most difficult, because there’s a tricky way to get in and out of it. It took a lot of planning about where the zipper would be hidden. I took my inspiration from the 1920s, when they had buttons and snaps and had to hide the closures.”

Finally, THE MUMMY took the longest actual work time. “There’s probably fifty yards of elastic in that garment, every layer hand-sewn. I was worried that it wouldn’t work, because I had never done anything like that before, and none of my teachers or fellow students had any experience with that type of material, either.” Temming considers this and other such experiments part of the learning process. “A lot of times I thought, ‘I’m so stupid. Why did I do this?’ Now that it’s all over I’m glad I did.”

Although she took her inspiration from the big screen,

Temming points out that the finished collection should not be confused with movie wardrobe. “I didn’t want to make costumes that should be in the films; I wanted to make dresses inspired by the films. They are very theatrical; they’re not for someone insecure to wear. But they are meant to be worn out to dinner and events, not for Halloween. Some dresses, like the BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, could just be a very elegant white dress if you don’t wear the nude nylon undershirt with the hand-painted stitches. There is some versatility to them, but they’re not mix-and-match sports wear—they won’t blend into your wardrobe!”

In fact, a much revised version of the noose dress has already been sold—for a wedding, no less. “Apparently, this woman wanted to show up the bride,” says Temming. “She had a nice figure, but for some reason she wanted breast pads. The dress had a life of its own—you could stand it up and swear there was an invisible woman in it! It was difficult to work on, knowing the reason behind it, but it helped me learn about working with clients. In the end, it didn’t turn out as bad as I had thought, but I still don’t think it should be worn at a wedding.”

Despite this, there is limited commercial potential for the hand-crafted collection, which would be difficult to mass-produce. “The noose dress would be flattering on a lot of different body types, but some of them would be very hard to produce in numbers, because of the hand-painting and beading. They’d be very expensive. They can be taken down to lower levels; for instance, the PSYCHO dress could have a print on the fabric instead of hand painting. When I did this, it was the highest form.” □



“It looks simple, but technically it was the most difficult,” says Temming (below) of her Bride of Frankenstein dress creation. “It took a lot of planning.”

Haunt Couture Photo Credits

Produced and arranged by Steve Biodrowski. Photography by Steven Palty, except Page 30. Makeup and hair styling by Debra Lamb, except Cameron, Lisa Temming, and Martine Beswicke. Frankenstein’s laboratory supplied by Jadis Scientific & Industrial Props. Special thanks to Julie Michaels.



MOTHER OF DARKNESS

Rosalind Allen wants to put horrific children behind her.

By Steve Biodrowski

She nursed the title character in *SON OF DARKNESS: TO DIE FOR II*. She adopted Linda Hamilton's killer brood in last year's *CHILDREN OF THE CORN II*. She supervised troubled teens bedeviled by blood-sucking arachnids in *TICKS*. But what Rosalind Allen would really like to do is uplifting mainstream films like *GRAND CANYON*. Not that the nurturing, maternal image of her genre work is to her disliking, but she would prefer to portray it in films of a less horrific nature.

Despite her all-American good looks, she is actually a native of New Zealand, who had done "a lot of theatre there, and I fantasized, wondering if it was possible for me to be a professional actress and make money at it. I was really thinking that I would just try it for a couple of years to get a taste of it and then go home, but it's been nine years."

The actress began her career in television commercials and daytime soaps. Her film debut was a small bit in *THREE MEN AND A LITTLE LADY*. *SON OF DARKNESS*, directed by David Price, provided her first lead, a role which she "took purely for the experience." Although again



Allen as she appeared in *TICKS*, which turned out better than she expected: "I thought, 'Giant ticks! What have I done?'"

written by Leslie King, who had helped lift *TO DIE FOR* above its low-budget horror competitors, the script was hampered by excess baggage in the form of returning characters, some of whom were not necessarily the ones who should have returned. The obligation to include them mitigated against coming up with a new story that could stand on its own, as when the jilted fiancée from the original arrives like a *deus ex machina* to save Allen's character.

"As an actor, if you decide you want to do something, you

really want to go in with 100% and hope that the director's vision and your own contribution could fill in the gaps with whatever it needs to make something great. But there's so many factors that are out of your control that you get really disappointed. But it was a great learning experience."

Budget and schedule, not to mention the freezing weather of the Lake Arrowhead location, took their toll. "We had a lot of problems, not to anybody's discredit. We all did the best we could under the circumstances. We even worked on a 'sound stage' that wasn't soundproofed. We had to stop whenever a truck drove by. We worked nights to avoid that."

Like *TO DIE FOR*, *SON OF DARKNESS* prefigures *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* in its romantic approach to vampirism, requiring a brief fire-lit love scene between Allen's character and Vlad Dracula (Michael Praed). Though not to the actress' liking, the nudity was at least employed with more-than-usual subtlety for low-budget horror. "I think the subtle approach is far more sexy and interesting—less is always more," the actress states. "There was real love in that story—even if it wasn't in the script, definitely when we were acting it out."

SON OF DARKNESS: TO DIE FOR II was Allen's first horror film.

That's what made it nice—it wasn't just about the horror."

Allen was less than thrilled with the final result, expressing gratitude that it never received a theatrical release. "I'm not so happy they put it on HBO!" she laughs. Still, reaction to its cable airing has been surprisingly positive. "I get a lot of phone calls. I tell them, 'You saw a little bit more of me than I wanted you to see!'"

At least the film provided a more interesting role than the stereotypical female victim. "I saw her as a very strong single woman taking care of her brother and making a living. She falls in love with this very dangerous doctor who she knows nothing about. A lot of bad things happen to her, but she's the only one to survive. There are very few people who would ever be in a situation like that—I mean, God forbid anything like that should happen in real life. You're not going to stand off in a corner and scream; you're going to fight for your life and for the people you love."

The role led to her being cast in Price's second directorial outing, *CHILDREN OF THE CORN II*. Allen calls the filming "a totally different experience, much more relaxed, even though the schedule was still tight. I didn't have to go through the emotional acting of



Her character unwittingly adopts the titular Son of Darkness, initiating the maternal, nurturing persona she has maintained throughout her genre work.

“I think the subtle approach is far more sexy and interesting [than nudity]...Women are taken advantage of that way, especially in movies on this level.”

SON OF DARKNESS, which was traumatizing. My part in CHILDREN OF THE CORN II didn't require as much—really it's about the young kids. It was great shooting in North Carolina, which is a totally different world—it made it easy to get into the role.”

That different world included local flora, which in a funny way prefigured her next film. “I literally had to spray myself from head to toe to avoid getting ticks on me; then I went on to get chased by *enormous* ticks. What does this mean to my career?”

When another actress backed out at the last second, the producers of TICKS offered Allen the vacant role opposite Peter Scolari (Tom Hanks former BOSOM BUDDIES co-star), as a social worker on a consciousness-raising camping trip with a group of misfit teenagers (played by WITCHBOARD II's Ami Dolenz, among others). “I had to drive up to Big Bear that night,” she relates. “I kept saying, ‘What's the movie called?’ My agent said, ‘TICKS,’ and I kept thinking she was saying, ‘TITS.’ I said, ‘Wait a minute! Are you sure you want me to do this movie?’”

“So after a 150-mile drive, I arrived on the set the next morning, having not yet seen the script. I got there, thinking,

‘Oh my god, giant ticks! What have I done?’ The first scene I did was the only thing I knew about the movie at that point. With all the information I had, I could just play it as I would do it myself. Then as I got more information I made any adjustments I needed to do, but it was truly by experimenting.”

Fortunately, Tony Randel had the necessary craftsmanship to put the film together under these less-than-ideal circumstances. “I think he's a very talented director,” Allen opines. “He's very good with special effects and editing. I totally enjoyed that movie. I enjoyed working with Peter Scolari, and Ami Dolenz is a really sweet girl.”

The film was Allen's first close encounter with splattery make-up effects. “There's a scene where I'm bent over one of the kids infested with ticks. The special effects guy is just off camera, and when they take a [cigarette] lighter to the kid's arm, there's supposed to be a small splattering of blood. The scene is going on fine, and all of a sudden a big gush of blood is all over my face, running down my neck—and they used that take. We were only halfway through the movie at that point; consequently, for the next two weeks, everyday in make-up they would have to reenact

that for continuity. At the studio next door, my girlfriend was playing a role. I'd walk over there on my breaks, and I can't even describe the looks I got. They were so glamorous on that set—I was jealous.”

Clearly, the actress is one of many who have fallen into horror through circumstance. “I did, truly. If anyone had ever asked me if I would be in this genre, I would have emphatically, a thousand times, said, ‘No way! I never even see this kind of movie!’ I'm the best kind of audience, because I'm easily terrified. I can't shake it off when I leave the theatre, so it's really amazing that I'm actually doing it right now. But it's been wonderful to have experience working in film. It gives you confidence. You learn so much about what works and what doesn't. Hopefully, not too much about what doesn't!”

Viewing horror films may be terrifying, but Allen has found that being on the other side of the camera is a completely different experience. “It's nothing like in your imagination. It's amazing to me that so much of what you see on the screen is

not evident while you're actually working. Part of the fun is that we'll be running away from a horrendous tick that wasn't on the set that day. We have to imagine it happening, and even then, what you and the director imagine at that time may be nothing compared to what the special effects are able to do afterward. You just hope your reactions are believable compared to what they put up on the screen.”

Looking back on her filmography to date, she says, “I know that eventually, when I'm doing studio movies, these will come back to haunt me in a major way. I don't mean to put them down, though—I have so much respect for what we got up on the screen in twenty-one days, unlike a studio picture that takes all day to do what we do in two hours. I'm grateful for the work, and there are certain points in your career when you can't avoid something unless it's ethically a problem for you. You can learn and move on, and it will help you do better things down the road.”

continued on page 61

Her role in CHILDREN OF THE CORN II was much less demanding, but the local flora was a nuisance: “Spiders, snakes, and ticks—my god!”



CAMERON

She's not just drawn that way; she's a toon temptress in the flesh.

By Dan Cziraky

"I'm not really bad; I'm just drawn that way," insisted Toon temptress Jessica Rabbit in *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT*. Well, if Jessica's pulse-pounding pulchritude was the devious design of all-too-human animators, how can we account for Cameron? In the 1992 film *SUNSET STRIP*, the statuesque redhead plays Crystal, a seasoned dancer who performs a show-stopping striptease to Jessica's signature tune, "Why Don't You Do Right?" while decked out in a costume that makes her look like the comic character's human avatar.

"The Jessica Rabbit routine was my doing," Cameron admits. "In Vegas, I had friends who said, 'You could be Jessica Rabbit.' When I went to the audition [for *SUNSET STRIP*], I showed up as Jessica. Actually, I made that dress, because that's how I saw the character, and it ended up in the film."

A native of Los Angeles, Cameron has spent most of her life dancing. When she was thirteen, her mother passed away, and she moved to Missouri to live with her father. "I ran away about six months later," she recounts, "and I've been on my own for a long time. I came back to L.A. and started bumming around, and I ended up in Las Vegas. I was still underaged and lost, and started learning how to



In between stints defending the Federation, Cameron occasionally has time to step into alien make-up, in one instance playing a Klingon.

dance. I put my time in with some shows in Vegas, and ended up being a lead in the *Folies Bergere*. I was over in Paris for about five months with the *Folies*. When I went back to Vegas, I started studying acting for awhile; then I came back to L.A. and started pursuing it as a career.

"I did a film down in Mexico City in the early '80s, which was called *HOLY MOUNTAIN*," she continues. "I kept running back to Vegas to do the big shows, but I've been in L.A. for about five years. I landed featured spots on *DALLAS*, *COLUMBO*, and *THIRTY-SOMETHING*, and then I starved for awhile," she laughs. "I had to keep going

back and forth to Vegas, still, to pick things up."

Cameron's acting career took a stellar turn when she was cast as Ensign Kellogg, the tactics officer on *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*. "This is my fourth season," she explains. "I'm on just about every episode. 'They're joking about it now, and I'm going, 'Real funny! Give me a bigger part!'"

Being tactics officer does provide plenty of opportunity to act out every Trekkie's dream of blasting enemies in defense of the Federation. "Recently, I found out that whenever I fire the phaser, it costs \$1000 to do the opticals for the beam. The producers keep saying,

'Cameron, do you have to shoot so much?'"

Cameron has also popped up in various alien guises, occasionally to help promote the show in advertising or at industry conventions. But some of her appearances are visible to viewers with eyes sharp enough to pierce the heavy make-up. "I've been a Klingon a couple of times. I was Gowron's aide in one episode, and we shot a billboard as the 'Klingon family' for the Universal Studios Florida theme park. The makeup takes about four hours. What's really funny is when you're tired and fall asleep in it, you wake up claustrophobic. Luckily, I didn't have to wear the teeth."

Cameron's turn as a Klingon, allowed her to play a joke on Michael Dorn (Lt. Worf). "The week before, I had told Michael I was going to be a Klingon, and he said, 'No, don't do it, Cameron.'" Cameron's Klingon make-up not only altered her features but drastically darkened her normally alabaster skin. "I came on the set, all made up, and it was funny. Michael came walking up to me, not knowing who I was, and he was saying, 'Hi, I'm Michael Dorn.' I went along with it for a little bit, then said, 'Michael...' He said, 'No, it's not you...oh, Cameron!'" Though she doesn't mind the makeup much, the smoky Klingon sets can be troublesome. With the smoke-pots going

STARFLEET ECONOMY

“Whenever I fire the phaser, it costs \$1000 to do the opticals for the beam. The producers keep saying, ‘Cameron, do you have to shoot so much?’”



Don't look for this beautiful Bajoran in any episode of THE NEXT GENERATION or DEEP SPACE NINE—this is Cameron doing a promotional appearance.

overtime, she admits, “I got sick after the last one. SUNSET STRIP was that way, too. I was dying! I'm always stuck on these smoky sets.”

With STAR TREK: VOYAGER prepping to fill the interstellar void when TNG makes the hyper-space jump to the big screen, Cameron is hoping that Ensign Kellogg will be going along with the rest of the Enterprise crew. “[The character] stands around with Ryker and Worf a lot, so I'm always asking Jonathan Frakes and Michael Dorn, ‘You're going to take me with you, aren't you?’ They say, ‘Of course!’”

“I'm on just about every episode. They joke about it, and I'm going, ‘Real funny! Give me a bigger part!’”



When not lounging around the Starship Enterprise or perfecting her Jessica Rabbit impersonation, Cameron can also be spotted “where everybody knows your name.” She was among the industry luminaries who populated the background when the last episode of CHEERS was filmed. “It was fun,” she recalls. “The complete cast was people from the industry. [Former NBC president] Grant Tinker was sitting next to me at the bar. Everybody was looking at each other, going, ‘Who are you? You're somebody; I know you're somebody.’”

Her STAR TREK co-stars were quite supportive of her role in SUNSET STRIP. “They're all buzzing about this film,” she smiles. “I based Crystal on Rita Hayworth and Jessica Rabbit, and made her a little bit like what Natalie Wood played in GYPSY: that elegant, movie-star kind of character. I choreographed my numbers and had a long talk about how I wanted it shot. I said, ‘I'm not doing this jumping-around-on-the-stage thing. Crystal would not dance like that.’”

“Nothing was ever discussed about the nudity before we filmed,” Cameron reveals. “So, the first time I ran one of the numbers, I did a complete tease, no nudity at all, all back-to-the-audience. The director came running up, saying, ‘Wait a minute—you have to go top-

less.’ I already knew he was going to do this, so I said, ‘Nothing was ever discussed.’ I did it very nicely. I didn't want to be a bitch. I said, ‘You don't assume,’ and they got all flustered. I told them how I thought Crystal would do this show, and they agreed.”

For her efforts, Cameron earned the dubious honor of being nominated in the category of “Breast Actress” in Joe Bob Briggs' 1992 Drive-In Academy Awards. He described her character as “...the experienced exotic-dancing star... who trains the shy new kid night and day, teaching her how to strip as though her life depended on it.” With a wry laugh, she admits, “We took out a full-page ad in Hollywood Reporter—‘For your consideration...’ It looked just like one for the Oscars, but it was for the Drive-In Awards. I sent him a copy of that, along with a leopard skin-wrapped box from Crystal, full of popcorn and two gold pasties.” This humorous bribe didn't work, as the award went to Ava Cadell for her work in HARD HUNTED.

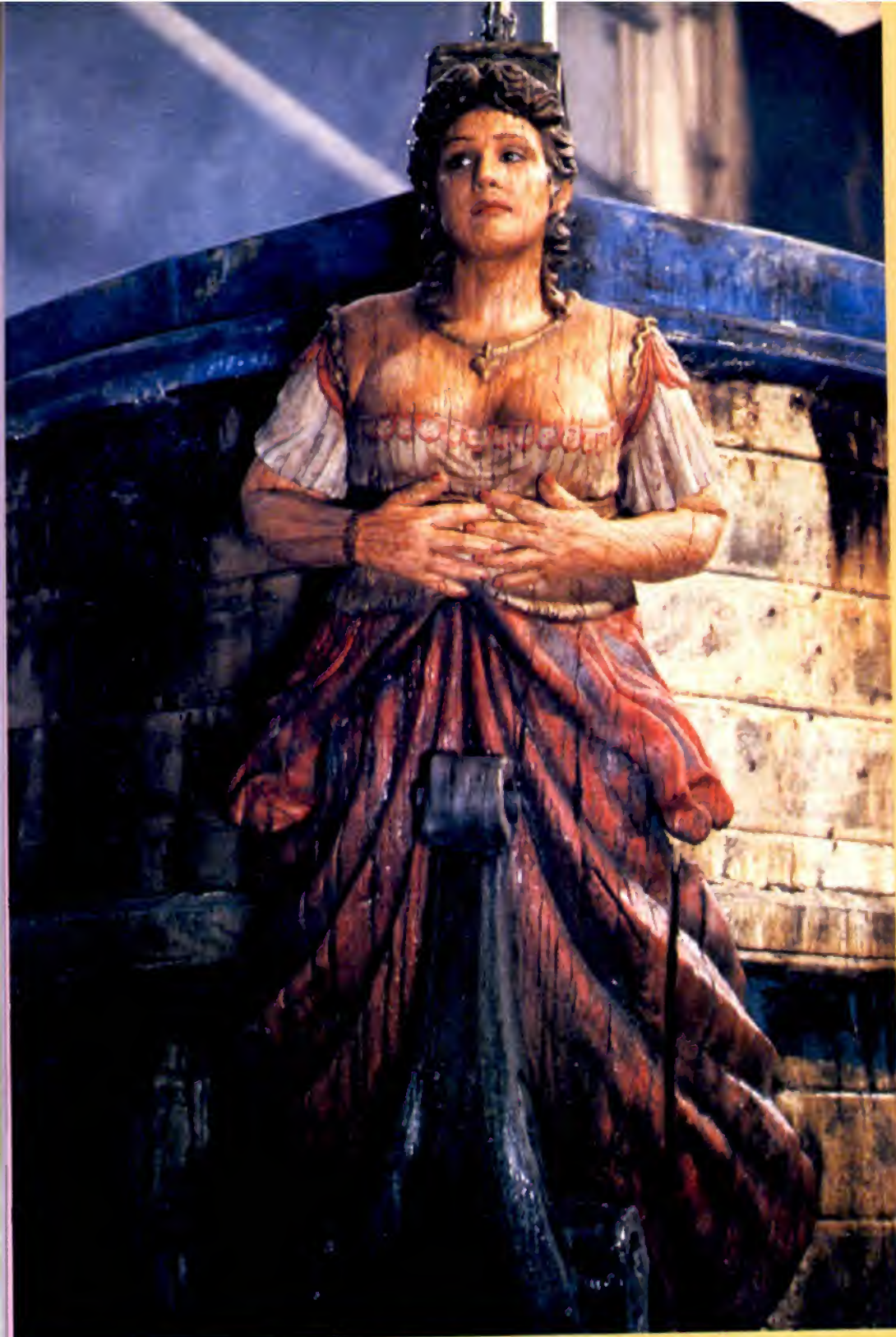
In a sense, Cameron resurrected the character for the tele-film SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER, again playing a stripper named Crystal. “I feel like she's a part of me now,” the actress admits. “In THIRTY-SOMETHING, I was the fantasy of Michael, and in DALLAS, I was sort of similar. Basically, I've been working on that type of character for a long time. I've been told, ‘You've got to stop these characters. You have to stop being so glamorous.’ I'm going, ‘I can play the others, too, but this is the character.’ They say I'm going to be locked into playing the glamour girl, but I've been working really hard on that

“I had friends who said, ‘You could be Jessica Rabbit.’ I made that dress, and it ended up in [a] film.”

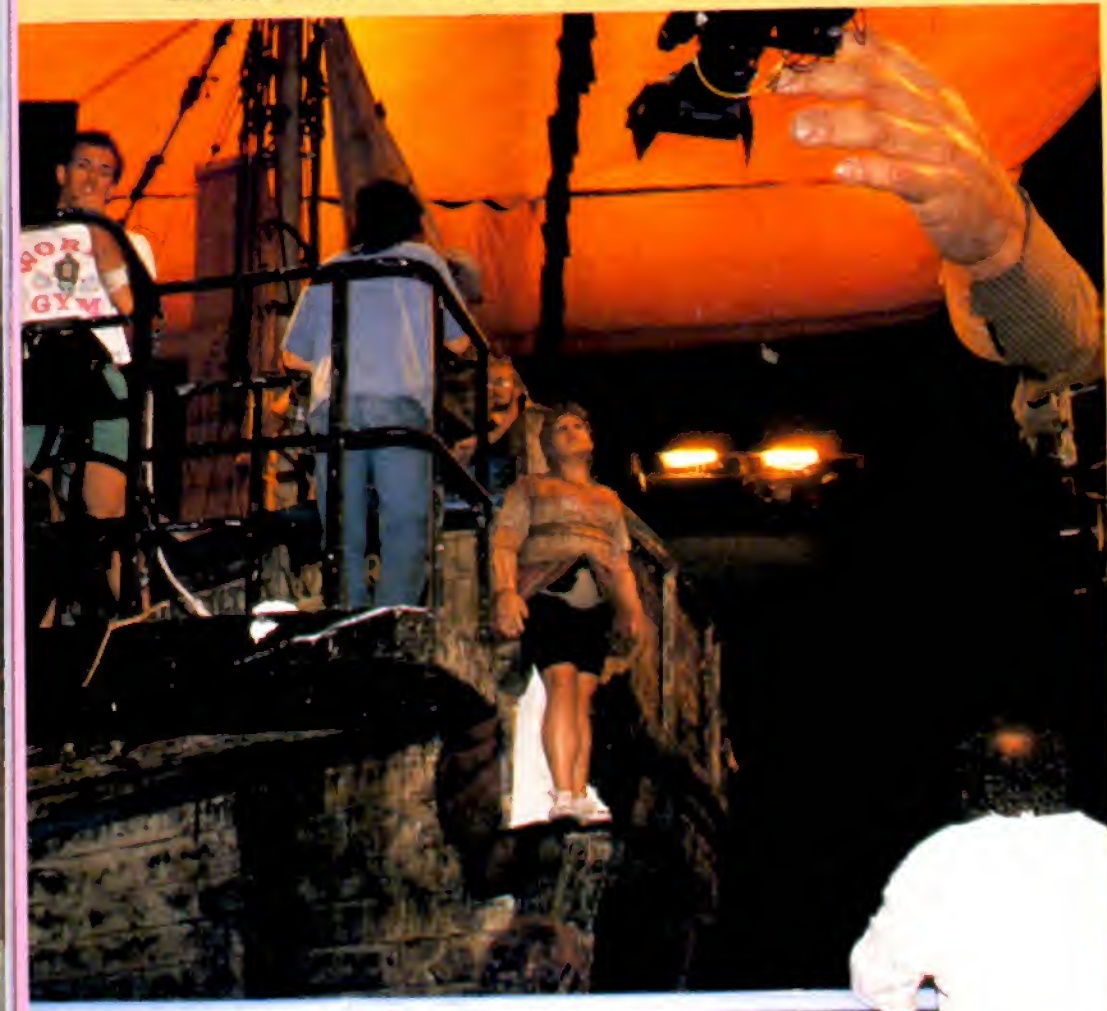
character, and I'd like to take her even further.”

Writer friends have encouraged Cameron to try her hand at scripting her own Crystal movie, something the actress has contemplated but not pursued. “She'd have to become a big star and then lose it all—over a man, probably. And there'd have to be some action.” □





Ricki Lake plays The Filthy Whore—well, technically the figurehead of a ship of that name. Lake called her role “the cutaway” girl, because it consisted mostly of reaction shots to the ship’s various perils. Below: preparing to film a shot.



CABIN BOY

The guy from David Letterman gets a life on the seas.

By *Steve Biodrowski*

“In the tradition of movies about spoiled brats who learn the ways of the sea from drunken fishermen” is the humorous way the press kit described *CABIN BOY*, but the film turned out to be more in the tradition of rats that abandon a sinking ship. Disney okayed the Tim Burton production, along with *THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS* and *ED WOOD*, while attempting to woo the director into a long term contract. When Burton instead signed on with Warner Brothers, Disney scuttled the film, giving it only a token release in January, while studio exec Jeffrey Katzenberg even joked to the press about its sinking box office.

CABIN BOY is the first film to star Chris Elliot, who previously appeared in genre efforts *THE ABYSS* and *GROUNDHOG DAY* after gaining attention on *LATE NIGHT WITH DAVID LETTERMAN*. The film was written and directed by Adam Resnick, who co-created Elliot’s television series, *GET A LIFE*. Tim Burton and Denise DiNovi produced, and Brian Doyle-Murray, Brion James, Ann Magnuson, and Ricki Lake co-starred. The makeup effects were provided

by Tony Gardner, and Doug Beswick brought the stop-motion monsters to life.

The idea for *CABIN BOY* was originated during the last season of *GET A LIFE* by Resnick and Elliot, who had met during their stint on *LATE NIGHT*. Sharing a love for old-fashioned adventures like *CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS*,

Below and opposite page, bottom: One of the film’s many ridiculous perils is an ogre in a polyester leisure suit, played by Mike Starr.





Above and mid-right: After steering the Filthy Whore into mysterious, uncharted waters, Elliot's Nathaniel encounters a living stop motion iceberg.

the two decided to write a comic take on the theme, utilizing Elliot's television persona. "We started with the basic character I've created and made the canvas for him," explained Elliot. "Nathaniel is basically the same guy I played on TV, but he speaks with an affected English accent."

As the idea evolved, the

fantasy element crept in. Elliot and Resnick were also fans of Harryhausen's SINBAD movies, and when Burton and DiNovi entered the picture, Resnick thought that including such special effects would tailor the script to Burton's directorial style. "I met with Tim Burton and changed to the Ray Harryhausen direction," Res-





Nathaniel dreams of a talking cupcake. Below: Ann Magnuson plays Calli, the ogre's wife. Bottom: Nathaniel goes skiing in the Filthy Whore's wake.



nick recalled. "The idea of combining CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS and SINBAD hadn't been beaten to death. We thought, 'We'll do it first and let other people beat it to death.' Actually, I think there should be creatures in all movies; for instance, SOPHIE'S CHOICE would have been much better!"

Resnick's additions included Mulligan (Mike Starr), a 50-

foot ogre who wears polyester suits and is married to the blue-skinned, six-armed Calli (Magnuson); Chocki (Tamblyn) a sort of merman with the tail of a shark; a cigar-chomping cupcake who appears in Nathaniel's hallucination; and the Filthy Whore's figurehead, who comes to life courtesy of Ricki Lake. Resnick wrote the script with Burton in mind as



director. "Tim wanted to go back to smaller movies like PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE after BATMAN RETURNS," said Resnick. "It was partially influenced by what he's done, but it was more that we share the same sensibility."

Ultimately, Resnick found himself in the director's chair, though he acknowledges Burton's involvement for getting Disney's Touchstone Pictures to make the film. Explained DiNovi, "Tim and I were big fans of GET A LIFE, and we wanted to meet with Adam and Chris. By coincidence, Tim was thinking about doing a sea adventure, and we loved their idea. We thought, at first, that Tim would direct. But if he had, there would have been tremendous pressure to make it a big-budget, expensive effects movie, and we both thought it should retain the feel that Adam envisioned. So we championed the idea of having Adam direct."

"I wanted a more antiquated look—it still costs a lot of money!" laughed Resnick. Following through with his original vision of a stylized, theatrical film, CABIN BOY was shot almost entirely on sound stages, in the manner of early cinematic seagoing adventures—complete with storm sequences, miniature battles, and an avoidance of modern effects technology. "It's state-of-the-art—1957!" Resnick joked.

"There were a few locations, but it has a really synthetic look," according to production designer Steve Legler, who provided more than twenty sets. "It's something that evolved because of economy. When you do a boat picture, you either shoot on location or shoot in the M.G.M. tank, which has a ceiling one-hundred feet high. Here we're limited—there's no real boat on the water."

Working with this low-tech approach was a challenge for Legler, whose sets had to provide access for the effects people to do their magic; for example, the lair for Calli had to hide puppeteers operating the extra two pairs of arms. "There were a lot of concerns because of how small the stage was," said Legler. "I had

"I can go on playing this character. I plan to make seven more of these films until I get too old to play the role—and then Timothy Dalton can take over!"



Star Chris Elliot and writer-director Adam Resnick confer on the deck of the *Filthy Whore*, pondering whether to go down with the ship or get a life.

a cliff and a pond surrounded by jungle, all on the same stage, so as you backed out of one set you bumped into another. I had to build the Calli set and leave enough space to cut out where the puppeteers would be, and design a bed and headboard that worked for them."

The bed and headboard were essential because the character remains mostly stationary. "Calli was the toughest thing we did," claimed Tony Gardner. "We were fortunate that she sits primarily on the bed, which is like her throne. We could come up through the pillows to articulate her arms. There was almost no lead time on that character. We were also fortunate that the wardrobe designer (Colleen Atwood) was very collaborative—if we needed a design element to hide mechanics, she would work together with us. It was one of those situations where your makeup test, your film

test, your final fitting, and your first day of shooting were all the same day. You just cross your finger."

Gardner also designed a rig to provide the side-to-side motion of Tamblin's shark tail, and turned Lake into the *Filthy Whore's* figurehead. "This is the first time I've ever seen anybody turn into a piece of wood," said Gardner. "It's the first time I've tried to match something with so much texture and make it move. Foam rubber tends to bend and fold—if she were a lizard, it would be very easy, but wood is difficult. They wanted her to wear something low-cut, given the name of the boat. We got some reference books of old figureheads and looked at the style of sculpting and painting. The front of the boat is fiberglass, and her foam suit blends into that."

"I'm glad Adam picked me to play the *Filthy Whore*—he said I have the right face for

that period, that Botticelli look," said Lake, who called her role the "cutaway girl" because it consists mostly of reaction shots to the various dangers the ship encounters. "But being in this makeup wasn't covered in Acting 101—sometimes I scare myself when I look in the mirror, because I forget I'm wearing it."

The thought of a ship named "*Filthy Whore*" seemed particularly amusing to Resnick, who mused, "I don't know why Disney didn't jump on the merchandising—they could have the boat ride at Disneyland, so little kids could say, 'Mommy, Mommy—I want to ride the *Filthy Whore!*'"

Although the limited budget suggested doing most of the effects on-set, Resnick stayed true to his inspiration by utilizing some stop-motion. "When they first brought me the script, there were a few elements they didn't know how to approach," recalled Gardner. "They didn't know whether they were going to do the iceberg and the cupcake with people in suits, radio-controlled puppets, or stop-motion. I think to get some of the flavor of a Ray Harryhausen film, they opted to put in stop-motion wherever they could. The iceberg is perfect for it; if you're not locked into a man-in-a-suit, there's a lot you can do."

"Part of the film derives from that old style of filmmaking," Legler added, "so there weren't meant to be a lot of high-tech effects—a little bit of blue screen, mattes, and miniatures. The word 'morphing' never came up!"

If this hybrid adventure-fantasy-comedy had sailed at the box office, the film's star would have seen definite sequel possibility. "I've been developing this character over the course of ten years. I'd describe him as an over-confident idiot. He's become the basic 'Chris Elliot guy'; now he's refined as Nathaniel, and I can go on playing him for years," said Elliot, adding optimistically, "I plan to make seven more of these films, until I get too old to play the role—and then Timothy Dalton can take over!" □

BARBARA STEELE

QUEEN OF HORROR

In the conclusion of our two-part profile, the actress ruminates on her reign of terror.

*By Steve Biodrowski
Interview by Christopher S.
Dietrich with Peter Beckman*

After her reign as Queen of Horror in Italy during the early 1960s, Barbara Steele retired from the big screen during her marriage to screenwriter James Poe. From 1967 until 1974, she made only occasional television appearances, such as in *HONEYMOON WITH A STRANGER* (John Peyser, 1969), an ABC Movie of the Week shot in Spain with Rossano Brazzi (*THE FINAL CONFLICT*) and Janet Leigh (*PSYCHO*). In 1972, she played a grieving widow opposite Richard Thomas and Geraldine Page in the *NIGHT GALLERY* segment "The Sins of the Father." This reasonably creepy episode is notable for a costume which, to the amusement of Steele's fans, seems designed to emphasize her resemblance to *SNOW WHITE*'s Evil Queen.

During this period, her husband wrote the script for *THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?* (Sydney Pollack, 1972), an Academy Awards-nominated film about a marathon dance contest during the Depression. The role that eventually went to Susannah



Steele's warden cracks a mean whip in this Fellini-esque fantasy sequence from the women's prison flick *CAGED HEAT*, directed by Jonathan Demme.

York was written for Steele, but screenwriters, unlike their brethren in legitimate theatre, haven't the clout to dictate casting. Ironically, York's wild-eyed gaze during her mad scene is more than a little reminiscent of Steele's famous glare. Losing the part was a bitter pill for the actress, who had hoped it would jump-start her career in character roles. Shortly afterward, she split from her husband (who passed away a few years later) and resumed, albeit somewhat reluctantly, her career as a cult star.

CAGED HEAT (1974) marked her return to the exploitation genre. This women's prison film, the fledgling effort from director Jonathan Demme, is typical of her work on this side of the Atlantic: a supporting role for a young director eager to add some name value to his low-budget film. As the wheelchair-bound warden, Steele is effectively sinister amidst the no-name cast, and a rather strange, almost Fellini-esque dream sequence liberates her long enough to deliver what amounts to a parody of her performance in *8 1/2*.

Working at New World Pictures, Demme managed, like other Roger Corman alumni, to



The notorious bathtub scene from David Cronenberg's *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN*: a plucky parasite is about to crawl up the drain for an encounter with Steele.

keep the exploitation amusing by adopting a tongue-in-cheek attitude. Asked her opinion of the final result, Steele takes a long, careful pause before responding: "I never understood if it was a satire," she contends. "I thought it was a send-up, made on \$2 and a piece of gum, and apparently everybody else thought it wasn't. If you think of it as a satire, it's OK, but [not] if you think of it as having any pretensions of being authentic. But Jonathan was lovely to work with—very sweet, very supportive. He had this incredible energy and enthusiasm. He was very passionate. He got some great reviews for *CAGED HEAT*—from Kevin Thomas, for example. So a lot of people thought he had talent, even then."

The actress is not surprised that Demme went on from this humble beginning to win an Academy Award for directing *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*. "I think he's a fantastic director now, one of the few directors that really allows a sense of space and creates enormous tension in his silences," she avows. "I feel that most American directors assault and rush you too much, as if the audience has no imagination. You've got to fill it in with your

ON HER LOYAL FANS:

"It's a mystery how these modest films took hold of the psyche of so many people... I'm mortified, because I feel removed from it, like they're speaking of somebody else."

own apprehension. I think John has a fantastic sense of what's appropriate. He's always making you wait for a little bit more."

Her next effort came a year later: *SHIVERS* (U.S.: *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN*). In the debut of Canadian horror-auteur David Cronenberg, Steele plays one of the residents of an apartment complex infested by parasites which erase sexual inhibition; in Steele's case, this results in an unleashed desire for a neighbor's wife, providing her second on-screen lesbian kiss. It is perhaps symptomatic of the loosening standards following implementation of the MPAA's ratings system that this shot, unlike the one in *DANCE MACABRE*, survives in domestic prints. The film is also memorable for the bizarre and repulsive scene wherein her character is infected by a para-

site that crawls up a bathtub drain and in between her legs.

This graphic, venereal horror was, obviously, a far cry from the atmospheric efforts of her Italian period. Whatever the final results, Steele found working in America far less satisfying than working in Europe. "It's a tribal experience to make a film in France or Italy. "It's a very intimate experience. Here, it's much more of a business. You're obliged to take your crews through unions; you can't just pick whoever you want. You feel that if they could raise Dobermans and make the same amount of money, they would not care. You don't feel the passion. In England, it's even worse; it's hostile, cold, disinterested.

"In Europe, you have the environment; here, you have to fabricate it," she continues the comparison. "All those Ital-

ian films, apart from *BLACK SUNDAY*, were filmed on location. That was one of the treats of doing them, because that's a wonderful way to spend a few weeks, wandering around these glorious castles. Of course, they pretended that they were shot in England—they had people reading the *Sunday Times*, and everyone was trying to look very English—while the background was quite baroque and Italian. We were working in *real* crypts and *real* graveyards on those locations, and that spooked me quite a lot. I felt that we were dealing with a realm that was a little touchy and that can be a little gross. I could feel we were conjuring up some kind of element which was a very delicate thing. If you're lying in a grave covered with catsup—even though it's someone dead 200 years—still there's some vibration in the air. Maybe that vibration was merely in my imagination—I don't know."

That same year, Corman cast her in a more respectable but slightly dull effort, *I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN*. In this fact-based story, Steele played one of the fantasy characters in the mind of a recovering mental patient



Steele's farewell to the big screen: revealed in the final reel of *SILENT SCREAM* as the mute slasher.

(Kathleen Quinlan). Many fans have complained that they could spot her name in the credits but not her face on the screen. "I couldn't either," she admits, "but I knew the minute I had a costume fitting that I'd be absolutely invisible. I was supposed to play a goddess. We shot twenty minutes of film on the fantasy sequences, but they were mostly cut because they didn't integrate with the rest of the movie."

In 1977, the actress realized one of her long-held ambitions by working for noted French director Louis Malle (*MY DINNER WITH ANDRE*). A few years previously she had said, "I would adore to work with Louis Malle, because I love the way he uses women. I like the silence that he allows, the thought process that he allows, the private moments and the subtlety he allows." Unfortunately, the actual experience of making *PRETTY BABY* (1978), in which Steele plays one of several prostitutes in a brothel inhabited by Susan Sarandon and Brooke Shields, failed to live up to expectations. "Louis Malle had a very difficult time with his crew, but he set himself up for that," she states, "because he treated every-

body as if there's only one person who makes the film and that is Louis Malle. He treated his crew with incredible contempt. It was extremely uncomfortable, which was very sad because it was a glorious location and a fabulous subject."

1978 also saw her in yet another Corman production, *PIRANHA*. The role of sinister government scientist had been written for a man, but Joe Dante (making his solo directing debut after co-directing *HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD* with Alan Arkush) was looking for a way to squeeze one more familiar face into a cast that already included stalwarts Bradford Dillman, Keenan Wynn, Kevin McCarthy, and Dick Miller. Like her fellow actors, Steele does a good job of playing it straight in this amusing *JAWS* rip-off, which, like *SHIVERS*, is a promising early effort from a director who would go on to bigger things in the genre. Looking back on her association with these neophyte talents, Steele calls Dante "very gifted" and Cronenberg "intense and focused," adding, "All of these young directors had a similar intensity—a fanaticism, really—which is probably the only way to get anything done in Hollywood when you're young. Actually, I've like working with these first-time directors; I've been lucky that they've been pretty talented. Of course, I'd prefer to work with them now, when they're more comfortable."

Throughout her career, Steele suffered the misfortune of several missed opportunities and unrealized projects, and 1979 was no exception. In the 1960s, Nicholas Ray had cast



In *PIRANHA*, Joe Dante cast Steele as an evil government scientist—one of the many familiar genre faces to show up in the film's supporting roles.

her in an abandoned version of Dylan Thomas's *THE DOCTOR AND THE DEVILS* (the script finally went before the cameras twenty years later, with Freddie Francis directing); in the same decade, Alan Renais called the actress about doing a horror film, then abandoned the idea; and Antonioni wanted to do a horror film with Steele and Monica Vitti, but he

never managed to get the project off the ground. As intriguing as these sound, the end of the 1970s marked at least as big a disappointment for genre fans. David Del Valle, Steele's agent at the time, tried to package a deal for a project entitled *DAUGHTER OF DRACULA*, essentially a remake of the 1936 Universal film *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER*, with Steele in the title role. Martine Beswicke was to play the Countess' assistant, a sort of female equivalent of Sandor (Irving Pichel) in the original, and Christopher Lee had agreed to do a cameo as Dracula. A treatment was written, but, sadly, financing could not be found.

1980 was the year of Steele's last completed feature, *THE SILENT SCREAM*. Appropriately, this was yet another directorial debut. However, un-

In the late 1970s, Steele and longtime friend Martine Beswicke (right) hoped to co-star in a remake of *DRACULA'S DAUGHTER*, packaged by then-agent David Del Valle (center)



like Bava, Schlöndorff, Reeves, Demme, Cronenberg, and Dante, Danny Harris never went on to establish a career, in fact, this is his only feature effort. It is not hard to see why: the film is a dismal slasher pic with a script that makes even Steele's weakest Italian efforts seem rigorously logical and coherent in comparison.

As in many of her other films Steele's presence is the only redeeming virtue. Revealed in the final reel as the deranged, mute killer locked in the attic by Yvonne DeCarlo, she manages to be both effectively threatening and oddly sympathetic. Credit her brief screen time to the fact that her casting, along with that of Cameron Mitchell and Avery Schreiber, was a last-minute attempt to get some marquee value into the movie: none of the three stars were ever on set with their young co-stars, requiring some awkward compositions and obvious body doubles whenever the characters are supposed to interact. "That was the result of trying to salvage some footage from the original shooting," the actress explains. "The director shot the movie twice, with his own money. He shot it with one cast, thought he'd miscast it and made a terrible mistake, so he turned around and shot the entire thing over again, which is a staggering luxury. I had no scenes wherein I related to any of my co-ed victims at any point." Altogether, it was a sad farewell to the big screen.

After *SILENT SCREAM*, the daily grind of looking for work in front of the camera convinced Steele to make a career change. "I didn't want to go through another casting session with 19 other people—it was just too humiliating and awful," she recalls. "I wanted to be on the other side of the camera and get some control over my life." She started working in development at Paramount and M.G.M., writing free-lance coverage of scripts submitted for consideration; then she became a story editor, which led to her meeting Dan Curtis, of *DARK SHAD-*

ON THE GENRE'S FUTURE

“There’s a phenomenal potential for great horror movies, as *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* showed. It was fantastic, because [Jonathan Demme] treated it with total conviction.”



During the orgasmic climax of *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN*, Steele attempts to transmit the venereal parasite to the one remaining uninfected character.

OWS fame.

Another cult figure eager to escape his association with the genre, Curtis was preparing to embark on a lavish mini-series version of Herman Wouk's *THE WINDS OF WAR* for ABC-TV. He brought Steele on board on associate producer; she spent the remainder of the decade working on the series and its sequel, *WAR AND REMEMBRANCE*. On the latter, which earned her and Curtis Emmys, she was promoted to producer; she appears briefly in both series.

Having established themselves in the mainstream, both Steele and Curtis felt comfortable returning to their horror roots. The result was the short-lived nighttime version of *DARK SHADOWS*, wherein the actress-turned-producer-turned-actress-again capably filled the shoes of the late

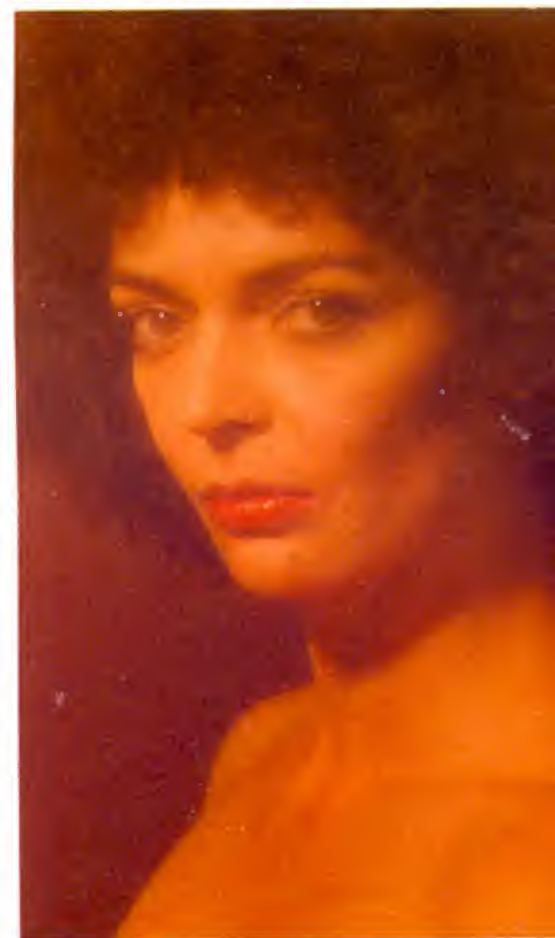
Grayson Hail as Dr. Julia Hoffman. "I was very uncomfortable in the beginning, because I still felt like a producer," she says of going before the cameras again. "It took me six weeks to feel OK about it. Ben Cross really helped me a lot. Also, it was very difficult for me to work when Dan was the director, which was for the first five hours [of broadcast time]—because I was used to working with him as a producer, it was very difficult to make this switch. I felt totally liberated the moment another director stepped in; then I felt like an actress again."

The part was much quieter than the melodramatic fare that had made her famous; ironically, considering her opinions about the over-charged acting required in her Italian efforts, Steele felt a bit straight-jacketed as an actress. "It was very

difficult," she states. "I put a lot of energy into it, but it was a very repressed, intense, glowering role. It would have been much easier if I'd had highly charged emotional stuff. I prefer to play much more expressive and emotional roles. I know why they cast me for that—I can see how I could be considered perfect casting for that—but I wish I'd had more freedom of expression."

Her role in the 18th-century flashback sequences was more to her liking; alas, cancellation prevented her from being able to explore the character. Though often entertaining, the show had the misfortune of premiering during the Persian Gulf War, when the entire nation was too preoccupied with watching C.N.N. to care about vampires. Had the show survived, it might have developed its own identity, instead of remaining a lavishly produced remake which was often unfavorable compared to its predecessor. "I don't think they should have stuck to the original storyline," Steele opines. "I think that was a big mistake. They should have taken a big swing into a new direction, instead of repeating it. I never understood that. It's like reshooting *MASH* twenty years later, using the same storylines. But it was

Even when out of character, the horror queen's piercing gaze remains as ominous as ever.





"It's like another me, not the me I know," says Steele of her horror image, which often suggests a certain resemblance to SNOW WHITE's Evil Queen.

beautifully shot and produced; it had a gorgeous look. I was disappointed they didn't go for a second season."

DARK SHADOWS is at least a respectable effort; if it remains her final genre performance, we can be thankful that it is a far better farewell to the Gothic realm than SILENT SCREAM would have been. Currently, her success with WINDS OF WAR and WAR AND REMEMBRANCE has inspired her to form her own company, Medici Productions, while maintaining a fatalistic attitude about acting again. "I hope to produce a mini-series in France, a co-production between the BBC and a French company," she says. "I haven't pursued work as an actress after the show at all. It's not the acting, you know; it's the

process of getting the job which is so vile. If somebody offered me a job that I liked, I'd be very happy to consider it, but I don't want to go on that grind again. It's too painful, so I didn't even bother to get an agent after the show. But I'd love to finish acting on a less suppressive note. I'd love to do some great, wild, wonderful, emotionally-charged role." (Steele may get her wish. She has just returned from Austria after playing a part in a small avant garde film, although at press time no details are available. Also, the veteran actress reports that Dan Curtis is developing a theatrical version of the short-lived DARK SHADOWS revival; however, it is "too early" to say if the project will ever actually materialize.)

She may never appear in

ON HER HORROR STARDOM:

"I was defensive about it for so long, because I thought it had tripped me up. Now it's pleasant. I'm divorced from it emotionally, and I can look at it with more objectivity."

another horror film, but from her long career she has gleaned some insights into the subject. "I'd like to direct one," she admits. "I still think it's a genre treated with far too much nonchalance. You're dealing with the underbelly of our psyches. I think there's a phenomenal potential for great horror movies that is really not exploited. And there's a phenomenal audience for them, as SILENCE OF THE LAMBS showed. It was so fantastic, because he [Demme] treated it with total conviction.

"A horror film must be graphically divine and have a great look—an eerie, moody look," she states. "I think horror films have to deal with the occult to a certain extent, with something which is not tangible, which is not in our everyday reality. They have to be almost surreal, because they're dealing with exquisitely abstract elements, with a kind of yearning for some knowledge we've had but lost, a kind of reaching out, a plea which is never resolved, so you have this eternal feeling that the quest will go on. And you get an urgent sense of your own mortality: in most blood-and-gore movies, you get a sense of the immediate hurt of being

done in, but a good horror film transcends that. There's something almost spiritual, in a peculiar way. Horror films deal with the idea of immortality, which is transfixing. It's beating fate—having a grasp on fate and transcending it by whatever means. But we're guilty about it, so the only way we can express it is through a very dark vision. I think horror films deal with primal guilt, an unvoiced guilt that we can't ever quite put our finger on. That's why they're so Gothic and Puritanical. It's in one's ancestral memory, all that historical pain and guilt you can't resolve. So I think all great horror films are essentially Jungian, because they can try to voice all of these unconscious demons we have within us."

Finally, Steele admits to a certain pleasant amazement that after all these years her adoring fans still remember her films and identify her with her horror image. "I don't understand it," she says. "They remember all this stuff, and I'm just mortified because I feel so removed from so much of it. I have to tell you it's just a role. I always think they're talking about

In THEY CAME FROM WITHIN, Cronenberg was able to use Steele's predatory allure to more explicit effect than was allowed in her earlier Italian efforts.



somebody else: it's like another me; it's not the me I know. I don't know where they get my address, but I still get letters all the time, which I'm very guilty about not answering. I'm going to apologize right now for not having replied to any of them; I'm about to hire someone and go spend a couple of weeks doing this—I swear to God!—because the karma lies too heavily on my head now. So all of you out there who sent me letters, you're about to get replies with a big thank you!"

On the subject of fans who mistake actors for the characters they play, Steele is happy to meet someone who is not disappointed that neither she nor Christopher Lee sleep in a coffin by day. "Well, you're very rare, but you're absolutely right," she declares, then drops to a devious whisper as the sense of humor lurking behind her sinister image emerges: "Actually, Christopher Lee *does* sleep in a coffin. He does wear Bela Lugosi's old Dracula ring, and he does have a Draconian throne in his living room, and he does serve sherry out of fabulous decanters. He fits into that role very well."

Perhaps the levity indicates that time has removed some of the irritation she once felt over her type-casting in the genre. Certainly, she doesn't seem to mind discussing the subject for what must be the 1001st time, although she does find it difficult to explain the popularity of her work. "It's a mystery how these modest little films have taken hold of the psyche of so many people," she remarks. "I was defensive about it for so long, because I felt it had tripped me and that it wasn't the real me. But now it's pleasant; it's interesting. I'm divorced from it emotionally, and I can look at it with more objectivity. *BLACK SUNDAY* looks so exquisite to me as a film; frame for frame, it looks so beautiful, but anybody could have been playing that girl."

Modest Barbara. Perhaps anyone could have played that girl, but only you could have made an impression that would endear you to fans around the world as the Queen of Horror. □



After sharing an Emmy with Dan Curtis for *WAR AND REMEMBRANCE*, Steele returned to acting in Curtis' *DARK SHADOWS* revival, playing Dr. Julia Hoffman, who tries to rid Barnabas Collins (Ben Cross) of his vampire curse.



CTHULHU WHO?

Hollywood horrors suggest Lovecraft's lore might just be "The Unfilmable."

By Randy Palmer and Steve Biodrowski

The textually ineffable has never been more cinematically inexpressible than in the work of Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937), but that has not stopped Hollywood from trying to translate his tales of hyper-dimensional shape-shifters to the screen. The author's unforgettable "Cthulhu Mythos," tales brimming over with shadowy titans and undulating tentacular behemoths, offers producers myriad opportunities to break with traditional horror and fantasy conventions, but the author's work has been more abused than used. Successful Lovecraft adaptations are nearly as rare as the original Arabic text of the *Necronomicon*.

An example of what Lovecraft termed "ye livelitest Awfulness," from *THE RESURRECTED*.



Above: *BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR* derives its climax from "The Tomb Legions" chapter of the "Herbert West" stories. Right: the somewhat less faithful conclusion of *THE RESURRECTED* has Joseph Curwen (Chris Sarandon) menaced by the skeleton of Charles Dexter Ward.

In 1963, when gifted fantasy author Charles Beaumont adapted Lovecraft's novella *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* for producer-director Roger Corman, the title ended up being changed to *EDGAR ALLAN POE'S THE HAUNTED PALACE*, because American International Pictures' executives Samuel Z. Arkoff and James H. Nicholson feared that no one knew Lovecraft's name. The Poe title and Vincent Price's marquee value put them at ease. Price, a standard fixture in Corman's Poe series of the 1960s, got to chew twice the usual scenery in the dual role of Charles Dexter Ward and Joseph Curwen. In an 18th-century prologue, Curwen and his assistant

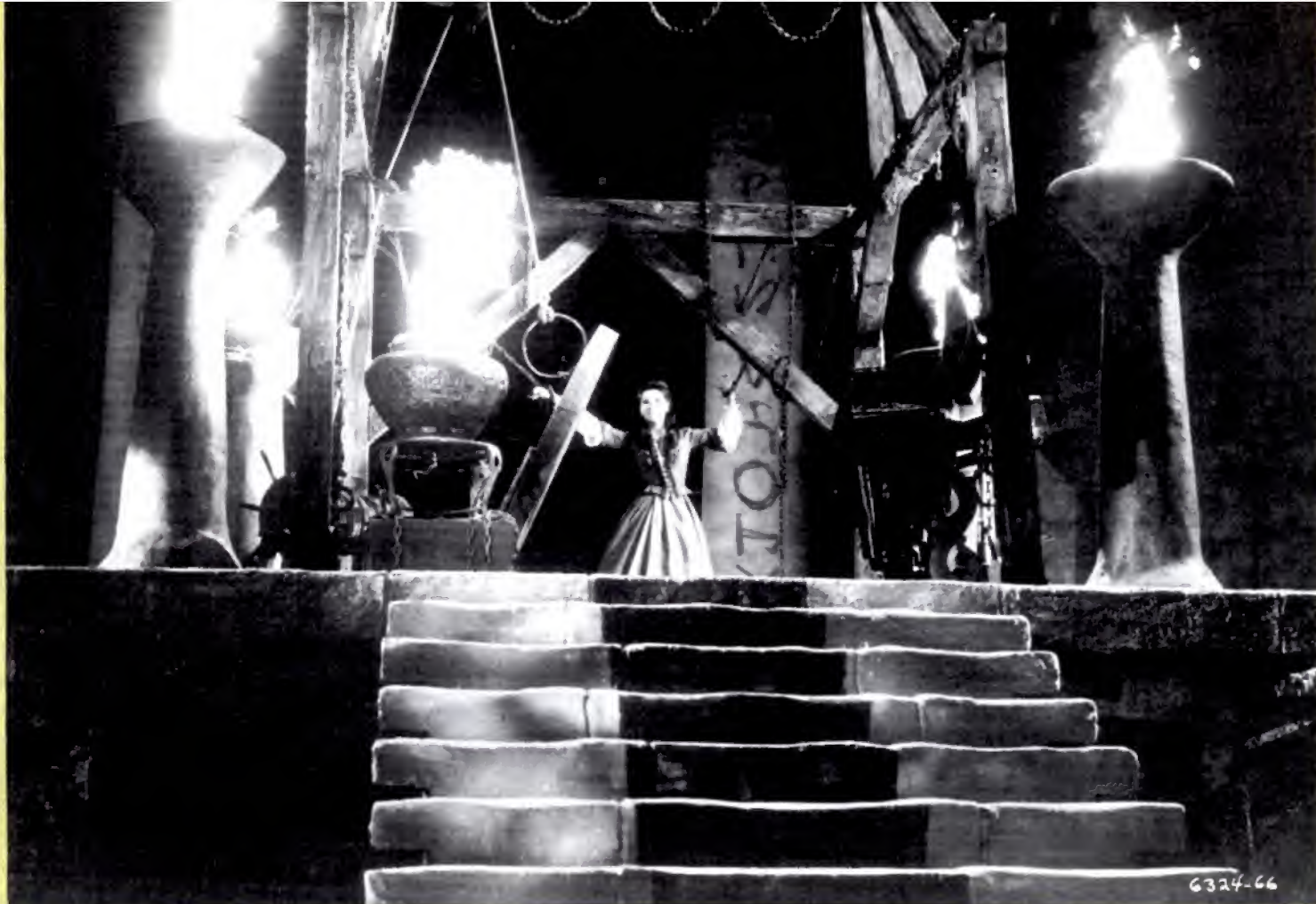
(Lon Chaney, Jr.) are attacked by angry villagers darned sick and tired of having their women abducted and bred with the Great Old Ones (in Lovecraft, various entities who are not necessarily evil but seem so because of their utter indifference to humankind). The sorcerer is burned alive, though not before uttering the standard curse, which dooms future generations of Arkham. When Ward and his wife (Debra Paget) come to Arkham two hundred years later, Ward is promptly enslaved by his ancestor's pernicious spirit, and before you can say "Yog-Sothoth" he is quoting the *Necronomicon*, opening foul pits, and just behaving abom-

inably in general. Though hardly faithful to its true source, *HAUNTED PALACE* does incorporate many Lovecraftian elements, and Corman came closer than any subsequent director to finding an atmospheric visual style that matched the author's prose.

DIE, MONSTER, DIE is the American Internationalized retitling of the 1965 British production, *MONSTER OF TERROR*, starring Boris Karloff and a slum-



ming Nick Adams. The film was based on one of Lovecraft's own favorites, "The Colour Out of Space." Unfortunately, HPL's carefully constructed tale concerning loss of humanity, family decay, and other-worldly "colours" was mostly discarded by rookie director Daniel Haller (Corman's Poe production designer). In the rewritten plot, Adams rescues his girlfriend from Karloff and the elder statesman's prone wife, who are succumbing to madness induced by an unearthed radioactive meteorite



Debra Paget is offered up to the Elder Gods in Roger Corman's *THE HAUNTED PALACE*. Despite its Poe title, the film is a loose adaptation of *THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD*, which later served as the basis for *THE RESURRECTED*.

kept in their green house, where the space stone compels outrageous plant growth (an element distilled from the original story). The film degenerates into a monster-on-the-loose fiasco when Karloff, in a retread of his *INVISIBLE RAY* role, rages out of control after receiving an overdose of radiation. (The ailing actor was unable to perform these strenuous scenes, necessitating a laughably obvious stunt double).

With one eye on HPL and the other on the exploitation market, Britain's Tigon Films whipped up *CURSE OF THE CRIMSON ALTAR* (a.k.a. *THE CRIMSON CULT*), an adaptation of another Mythos tale, "The Dreams in the Witch House." Tigon's scheme to bring together for the first time an all-star cast of Karloff, Christopher Lee, Barbara Steele, and Michael Gough backfired in more ways than one. The film managed to desecrate Lovecraft, embarrass Gough and Steele, and aggravate Karloff's medical condition to the extent that the actor died of pneumonia before the film's release.

Unfortunately, the screenwriters opted for conventionality and jettisoned 99% of Lovecraft's story elements. Karloff plays an occult expert called in to investigate strange goings-on at an English countryside mansion. Lee is the surreptitious leader of a witchcraft coven, as well as the reincarnation of an ancient sorceress (Steele) who manifests herself in

the dreams of the young hero, urging him to sign the "Black Book" in his own blood. It's very creaky, familiar stuff—and not at all like the story. Despite Tigon's intention to co-star two generations of horror actors, the cast is utterly wasted: Lee and Karloff have the best scenes, but the best of mediocrity is still mediocre; Steele, with her green body make-up and single-syllable line ("Sign!"), is merely decorative; and Gough plays a wimpy butler (not at all like Alfred in the *BATMAN* films) who creeps around muttering warnings like "This place is accursed!"

After his disastrous debut on *DIE, MONSTER, DIE*, Daniel Haller would seem a woe-begotten choice to direct the adaptation of another major Lovecraft work, but he fared considerably better with Corman's 1970 production of *THE DUNWICH HORROR*, the first AIP release to feature the author's name in its promotion. However, once again Hollywood conventions and commercial considerations left Lovecraft in the loft. Haller ended up with a decent *monster* movie but not necessarily a good *Lovecraft* movie.

Wilbur Whateley (Dean Stockwell), a student of occult lore, steals the Miskatonic University's copy of the *Necronomicon*, whose rituals can bridge the gulf between this world and the realm of the Great Old Ones. Required here (but not in the original, as

HPL rarely populated his stories with female characters) is a virginal sacrifice, in this case eternally chaste Sandra Dee. An out-of-place Ed Begley, Sr., is the occult expert who foils Wilbur's plans, though not before the glutinous monster of the title (actually Wilbur's twin brother by Yog-Sothoth) ravages the wilds of Dunwich.

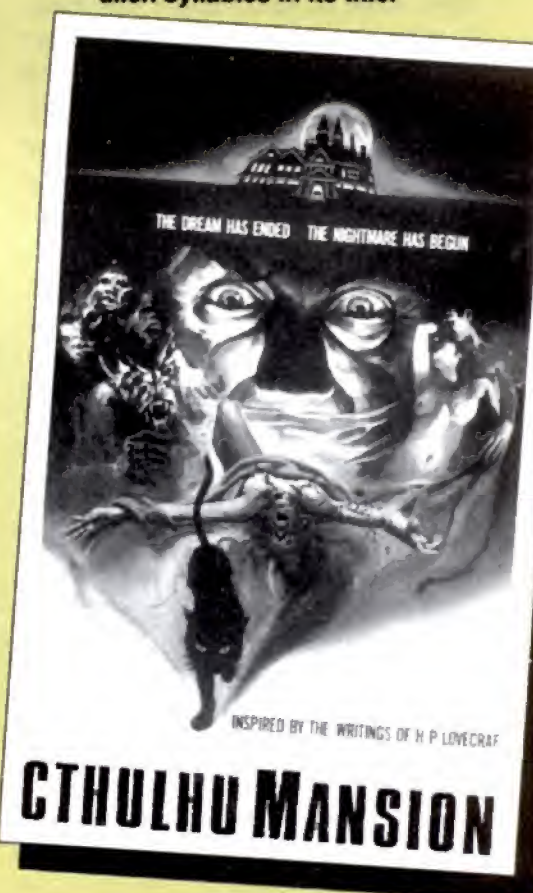
In spite of the major corruption of Lovecraft's text, a few elements survive, most notably the title itself. Whereas HPL revealed the invisible spawn of Yog-Sothoth only briefly, AIP figured they wouldn't have much of a monster movie without a monster, so a tentacled Dunwich demon was devised. Haller, to his credit, begged off showing the monster too much, instead teasing viewers with greased-lightning glimpses. Though hardly equal to its source, the film falls not quite so short as most other celluloid Lovecraftian entities.

Director Sam Raimi's 1983 production of *THE EVIL DEAD* utilized Lovecraft decor, including a magical tome strongly hinted to be the fabled *Necronomicon* and finally identified as such in the 1987 follow-up, *EVIL DEAD II*. In the series' third entry, *ARMY OF DARKNESS*, the book played an even more prominent role.

Though Raimi may be fond of HPL's work, none of the *EVIL DEAD* films is based on Lovecraft. It would take the wicked hand of genre visionary Stuart

Gordon to really popularize Lovecraft—or at least a version of Lovecraft—with *RE-ANIMATOR* (1985). Gordon's source material was "Herbert West—Reanimator," a six-chapter serial penned in 1922 at the request of *Home Brew* magazine. Lovecraft was not altogether pleased with the series of stories, believing (justifiably) that such written-to-order fare could hardly approach the level of artistic integrity for which he was striving. For this reason, it is perhaps slightly less surprising than expected that, for once, the

CTHULHU MANSION appropriated little from Lovecraft except the dread alien syllables in its title.



film version exceeds the author's original.

West (Jeffrey Combs, profiled on Page 26) is certain that the dead can be revived with his special serum if the body is fresh, but the corpses turn out to be never "quite fresh enough." Gordon based most of RE-ANIMATOR on the first two West tales, "From the Dark" and "The Plague Demon." Lovecraft's prose is slopping over with glop and gore, just like the film; the grue is simply obscured by his plethora of adjectives and typically convoluted style. Gordon, of course, pumped up the plasma even more, with the result that RE-ANIMATOR was released unrated to theatres, although an R version exists, as well as a TV version, containing expository material included in neither previous version.

The success of RE-ANIMATOR prompted an adaptation of another minor Lovecraft tale, "From Beyond." The director-producer-writer team of Gordon, Brian Yuzna, and Dennis Paoli saw potential in the story's suggestion of bi-existential planes. The problem, as with most Lovecraft, was characterization—there was none. Gordon and company solved this by stripping the narrative of its penscript populace and inventing a new set of characters. FROM BEYOND proved that RE-ANIMATOR was no fluke; it was almost as good as its predecessor, and as genuine a translation as possible, given the paucity of events in the original story.

Viewer interest is piqued early as Doctors Tillinghast (Combs) and Pretorius (Ted Sorel) experiment with a "resonator" machine that bridges two realities, allowing the monstrous denizens of a parallel plane to enter our dimension. Derived mainly from ideas only sketchily touched on by Lovecraft, FROM BEYOND's storyline is occasionally disjointed, which may explain why it failed to garner the attention generated by RE-ANIMATOR. Also, the material lent itself to a menagerie of monstrosities which could not be wholly realized on screen sans an enormous effects budget (though what does appear, courtesy of John Carl Buechler's effects unit, is mostly satisfactory).

Perhaps realizing that the Cthulhu Mythos would remain unfilmable on a limited budget, Yuzna avoided "From Beyond" type stories when making his directorial debut, instead returning to the "Herbert West" series with BRIDE

HPL IN HOLLYWOOD

"The Cthulhu Mythos offers an opportunity to break with traditional horror conventions, but successful adaptations are as rare as the original Arabic text of the *Necronomicon*."



Jeffrey Combs is cornered by an entity from "beyond the bounds of infinity," in FROM BEYOND, expanded from a seven-page story of the same name.

OF RE-ANIMATOR. Although the film enjoyed some minor acclaim from hard-core fans, it suffered the fate of most sequels by utilizing material which had already become overly familiar.

There were also script problems, so pieces were cut out, shuffled around, and stitched back in, with inevitable loss of continuity. The final version retained portions of Lovecraft's fifth and sixth "Herbert West" vignettes, "The Horror from the Shadows" and "The Tomb-Legions," combined with new situations involving the construction of the titular bride. Perhaps the problems arose from trying to continue West's saga without following his character arc, which goes from demented idealist to just plain demented in the stories. Whereas Lovecraft wrote that "his once normal scientific zeal for prolonging life had subtly degenerated into a mere morbid and ghoulish curiosity," the sequel maintains him as an admirable anti-hero. At least 50% of Lovecraft's "Herbert West" material remains unmined, gory grist for splattery sequels.

Thanks to Gordon and Yuzna, Lovecraft's name is now considered bankable in Hollywood, at

least at the direct-to-video level. The result is that more low-budget producers than ever before are cashing in on the author's public domain brand name. Still, most of Lovecraft's major works remain untouched. Which is probably just as well: the Cthulhu Mythos obviously would require extraordinary special effects, but even lesser works present obstacles in the literary-to-cinematic transition. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the 1988 video release, THE UNNAMABLE. Attempting to infuse the proceedings with a Lovecraftian flavor, writer-director Jean-Paul Ouellette has HPL's Randolph Carter (embodied by Mark Kinsey Stephenson) speak in "Lovecraftese"—certainly not an accurate barometer of modern parlance. (Indeed, it's not even indicative of Lovecraft's time—HPL was a very unusual individual.) Thus, the Carter character puts the film at odds with most viewers inside the first five minutes.

Besides that, the film isn't much good. Lovecraft's story, basically a discourse on literary definitions (can something truly be said to be "unnamable"?) is ignored in favor of the standard haunted house spook show,

laced with periodic gobs of gore and with a monster that is most definitely identifiable. To be fair, the creature is quite well done, compliments of effects specialist R. Christopher Biggs and mime Katrin Alexandre, but it's a far cry from Lovecraft's gelatinous being that was "everywhere at once."

The 1993 sequel, UNNAMABLE II: THE STATEMENT OF RANDOPH CARTER, is a little better. Taking the second half of its title from another minor Lovecraft story, Part II brings back the creature from the first film, along with Carter (Stephenson again). The cast, also includes a slumming David Warner (who receives top billing—for a single scene!) and John Rhys-Davies as Carter's companion Dr. Warren, who uses a spell from the forbidden *Necronomicon* (funny how this ult. a-rare volume keeps popping up) to untangle the beast from its human host. So much for Lovecraft.

In 1987, "The Colour Out of Space" became the kernel of a second adaptation, called THE CURSE. Actor David Keith made his directing debut with this competently acted but sloppily executed feature that is closer to Lovecraft than the Haller version, although nowhere in the credits is the literary source acknowledged.

This is perhaps just as well, since the film is most notable for its blatant misogyny—not of the graphic violence variety associated with slasher films, though equally pernicious nonetheless. Just as a kiss between two teenagers heralded the entrance of the title character in THE BLOB, a wife's adulterous liaison seems to call down the "curse" of the title, a meteorite that wreaks ecological havoc. Driving the point deeper, a later scene portrays a conscientious doctor being seduced by his wife into keeping his mouth shut about the danger. It's as if female sexuality were responsible at every turn for the ensuing calamity.

With THE RESURRECTED (1991) director Dan O'Bannon and screenwriter Brent V. Friedman made another attempt at THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD. Although their version is far more true to Lovecraft's plot than THE HAUNTED PALACE, the film seems to bear out Brian Yuzna's contention that "very 'true' adaptations [can] miss the whole damn point."

First, the film suffers from an almost total lack of atmosphere,

due to indifferent location shooting. John Terry, a fine actor in *FULL METAL JACKET* and *OF MICE AND MEN*, is overcome by the poor execution of the material (he has since dropped the film from his resume), and Chris Sarandon's fine turn in the Curwen-Ward double role is given minimal screen time.

The real problem, however, is the plot itself. Despite being relatively faithful to the events of the novella, the film is utterly banal when stripped of the cosmic menace underlying Lovecraft's tale. Without the Cthulhu Mythos (Curwen no longer seems to be a servant of the Great Old Ones), we are left with a simple bogey story about a private eye chasing after a necromancer.

Before O'Bannon got ahold of it, Friedman's script (titled *SHATTERBRAIN*) apparently was more on the mark, focusing on a psychiatrist (Dr. Willet, in the original story) who discovers that his mental patient is actually not Ward but Ward's resurrected ancestor. This revelation drives the doctor to madness (hence the original title) when he realizes that his rational philosophy is a mere illusion.

This is the archetypal Lovecraft plot device: a character's blissful ignorance is shattered by the realization that, behind the pleasant facade of normal life, there lurks a horrifying reality involving vile forces beyond human comprehension and control. Although these forces initially seem like traditional demons, the true horror is that they are actually other-dimensional beings, whose very existence contradicts all traditional beliefs, leaving the characters with nothing left but existential despair. (It's too bad that Dario Argento



Two of the filmic versions of Lovecraft's *Necronomicon*, courtesy of Anthony Tremblay: the volume in *ARMY OF DARKNESS* (left) was limited by having to resemble the one in *EVIL DEAD II*; a more elaborate version was possible in *NECRONOMICON* (right).



never accepted the offer to direct a Lovecraft tale. His violent giallo thrillers approximate this plot structure, with protagonists shocked into a new awareness by a brush with horror. Substitute the Mythos for murder and madness, and you have a Lovecraft story.)

This failing on the part of Hollywood to understand the essence of Lovecraft (regardless of whether or not they get the plot details correct) is nowhere more evident than in HBO's *CAST A DEADLY SPELL* (1991). This second misfired attempt at fusing the Mythos with the private eye genre is not an actual adaptation but an original story featuring a gumshoe named H. P. Lovecraft.

By combining Lovecraftian elements with traditional magic, Joseph Dougherty's script diminishes the Mythos (the Great Old

Ones are invoked, but they come across just like traditional demons). Also, if Fred Ward's private detective is already aware of the supernatural (as is everybody else in this alternate version of 1948 Los Angeles), then there can be no shattering revelation of its existence. What was needed here was a *KISS ME, DEADLY*-type plot, with the shamus following a thread of clues that "gradually unravels his whole existence into chaos and nightmare" (to quote David Pirie in *A Heritage of Horror*). Instead, we get traditional moralizing about not being on the take, which in this context means not using black magic.

The film's climax provides a decent visualization of a sorcerer (David Warner—does this guy like Lovecraft or what?) destroyed by the very being he summons from another dimension. (This idea certainly suits Lovecraft, who had a sorcerer warn of "Mortall Perill" in asking help of an Old One "not dispos'd to give it.") Unfortunately, the explanation for this event asks us to believe that one of the Elder Gods, on the verge of bridging the gap into our dimension, would turn around and head home because the offered female sacrifice turned out not to be virginal. This lame deus-ex-machina (reminiscent of Paul Morrissey's camp extravaganza *BLOOD FOR DRACULA*) leaves the hero helpless on the sideline and suggests a better title would have been "The Fuck That Saved the World."

Released to home video shortly after *CAST A DEADLY SPELL*'s HBO debut, *CTHULHU MANSION* may have tried to ride the coattails of viewer familiarity with Lovecraftian concepts, but the filmmakers did little outside of appropriating those dread alien syllables. This film has scarcely anything to do with HPL's fiction and, except for one or two minor scenes, is boring as hell to boot. Cthulhu's "mansion" actually belongs to a retired stage magician who keeps the beast locked in his cellar (yeah, right) and unleashes it only to do in his enemies and the occasional gang of bad boys who drop in every now and then. Writer-director J.P. Simon seems content to dish out gobs of humdrum grue in place of the slightest hint of originality, which may explain the opening credits disclaimer that the picture is only "inspired" by Lovecraft.

If Hollywood has shown us anything, it is that such faithless "inspiration" is not enough. Even more honorable attempts face problems presented by the author's work, which is often short on plot and long on style—exactly the wrong combination for translation to the screen. Because so much of the literary source is unfilmable, it seems that, whether it be Roger Corman's atmospheric Poe-tics or Stuart Gordon's gruesome gore-fests, capturing the effect of Lovecraft's prose requires a stylist who can fill the cinematic void with his own vision. □

Suzan Farmer and Nick Adams confront an ailing Boris Karloff in AIP's *DIE, MONSTER, DIE!*, an extremely loose adaptation of "The Colour Out of Space."



POINT

by Anthony P. Montesano

THE UNBORN AS MONSTER: Do genre filmmakers reveal one-sided politics?

In the wake of the 1973 "Roe vs. Wade" Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, horror and science fiction cinema has offered a decidedly one-sided pro-abortion stance by portraying the unborn as "invaders from within."

The medium has long been used to convey messages beyond what is actually on screen. At the height of 1950s McCarthyism, *THE THING*, *INVASION OF THE BODY-SNATCHERS*, and *INVADERS FROM MARS* all fed a growing fear of Communist takeover in America. These thinly veiled science fiction thrillers were actually tapping a more realistic fear. As the mood in the country shifted following "Roe vs. Wade," horror and science fiction films have seized the zeitgeist with a similar negative reinforcement of unborn life.

Even though Roman Polanski's *ROSEMARY'S BABY* predates the Supreme Court decision by five years, it was prototypic of how pregnancy and childbirth would be handled in post-Roe horror films: the husband sells his soul to the Devil, but it's the wife who's impregnated and forced to carry the Devil's baby to term. A host of films made since then have sought to exploit the growing militant feminist knee-jerk theory that men and (in many cases) children are the enemy and women the victims.

The *ROSEMARY'S BABY* influence can be seen in the post-Roe 1974 TV movie *THE STRANGER WITHIN*, written by Richard Matheson, which depicted a pregnant woman whose mind and body are



In *ALIEN 3*, Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) faces the "ultimate in unwanted pregnancies," which will kill not only her but everyone else if not aborted.

controlled by her unborn child. Larry Cohen's *IT'S ALIVE* series began the same year, with the latest entry, *IT'S ALIVE III: ISLAND OF THE ALIVE*, released in 1987 at the height of the Reagan/Bush era. In the opening scene of the 1987 film, a mutant child rips itself out of its mother's womb in the backseat of a cab before devouring the mother, the taxi driver, and the police officer who delivered it. "I should've never had this baby!" the mother screams, moments before giving birth. Her reward for not aborting is violent death.

ALIEN drew as much of its tension from its sexual metaphors as it did from its monster. Ridley Scott's film (the first in the series) seethes with sexual overtones which constantly pit the image of woman as a sexual being against the image of

the nurturing mother. Symbolism which abounds throughout the film: astronauts discover the alien eggs by entering a vagina-like cave opening. Attacked by the face-hugging alien spawner, an astronaut is impregnated by a long, tubular tongue inserted down his throat. To communicate with the ship's computer, named "Mother," the astronauts must enter a womb-like room. In the second film, James Cameron's *ALIENS*, the symbolism continues as Sigourney Weaver's Ripley—along with a few Marines—protects a young girl from the aliens and their queen "bitch." The maternal instincts displayed in the second film are put to the test in *ALIEN³*, when Ripley herself is impregnated with an alien fetus. This is the ultimate in unwanted pregnancies: the "child" will kill its mother—and everyone else—if not aborted.

Roger Corman's *ALIEN*-like *THE TERROR WITHIN* also explores the unborn-as-monster theme. In this post-apocalyptic film, a small group of underground survivors welcome a woman from above who is pregnant, it turns out, with the mutant child of monsters dwelling above ground. Abortion is contemplated, but the monster child—during an emergency C-section—rips itself from its mother and grows rapidly, only to impregnate another female survivor. She, however, dies while performing an abortion on herself. As in *ALIEN³*, the abortion imagery is strong: the women in both films are victims whether they have the child or not.

Depicting the unborn as a mon-

ster was the sole purpose of the 1991's *THE UNBORN*. A childless couple seek the help of a clinic with great success at *in vitro* fertilization. The catch is that the clinic is run by a mad scientist who wants to form a superhuman race at the sacrifice of the mothers carrying the babies. When the main character (Brook Adams) realizes what's going on, she literally goes down a dirty back alley to abort her child. The film may be horror, but it also furthers the notion of men's (i.e. the doctor's) disregard of women for the sake of the unborn (a popular piece of rhetoric from pro-abortion women's groups).

When films haven't portrayed the unborn as monsters, they've portrayed anti-abortionists as psychotics. Witness *CRIMINAL LAW* and *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*. In the first, Kevin Bacon plays a serial killer whose sole prey are women who have had abortions. The audience soon learns that his mother is an abortionist and that the Bacon character once surreptitiously witnessed her performing an abortion. At the film's release, reviewer Jami Bernard, writing for the *New York Post* was outraged—for the wrong reason. She wrote, "It's the movie's grisly anti-abortion subtext that is its most horrifying and infuriating element. Lots of movies make women victims of gruesome sex murders, but *CRIMINAL LAW* tries to justify it." She was wrong: the film never condones the acts of murder being committed, but it does further the notion of anti-abortionists as loonies.

THE HANDMAID'S TALE takes the militant feminist's fear to its zenith. Its premise is that in the future, the United States will be run by religious fanatics who, faced with a mostly sterile population, will forcibly women against their will to bear children for wealthy, childless couples. These handmaids, after being forced to have sex, are punished for not becoming pregnant—even if this is due to the man's infertility. (It's the ultimate example of the government forcing pregnancy on women, in the feminists' view.) *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* is fueled by the same kind of mentality that tried to convince the public (perhaps with some success) that the Reagan and Bush administrations would lead to this kind of totalitarian future. □

Depicting the unborn child as a monster was the sole purpose of the 1991 Roger Corman production, *THE UNBORN*, starring James Karen.



THE UNBORN AS SAVIOR: ...or is there a multiplicity of viewpoints?

COUNTERPOINT

by Steve Biodrowski

"Slay the flesh that is not human....Crush the babes who are not children....Else shall our kind reign no more," warns Anne Rice in *Lasher*, the climactic sequel to *The Witching Hour*. Although neither book has been turned into a film (yet), this dictum perfectly sums up the cinematic genre's attitude toward monstrous children, whether born or unborn.

In his essay "American Nightmare," critic Robin Wood reduced the archetypal horror movie plot to a single sentence: "Normality is threatened by the monster." He went on to label two political variations on this theme: the "Progressive" and the "Reactionary." Though Wood obviously preferred the former (which grants its monster some measure of sympathy), what concerns us here is the latter, which portrays its monster as an unsympathetic danger which must be destroyed at all costs.

Films like *THE STRANGER WITHIN*, the *ALIEN* series, and *THE TERROR WITHIN* feature non-human pregnancies which pose a threat to normal human life. Destroying these unborn monsters (which might be better understood as infestations or infections rather than as pregnancies) is not a liberal stance in favor of abortion, but rather a conservative one in favor of protecting the status quo.

Such films may be considered liberal in the sense that they do favor a woman's right to choose. But, even granted this right, female characters inevitably opt for the same choice. For example, in *DAWN OF THE DEAD*, when a male character suggests aborting a pregnancy, another objects. The woman in question opposes having men make decisions for her, but she herself decides to continue the pregnancy. This may be termed "pro-choice" but hardly "pro-abortion." In fact, no horror film has ever celebrated a woman for terminating a normal human pregnancy.

Additionally, not all genre films showcase the unborn as monsters. *LOOK WHO'S TALKING* and *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 5: THE DREAM CHILD* portray sentient beings in the womb. In both, unwed mothers are offered a chance to abort, and refuse. In the latter, the unborn is even given a name and portrayed as the spirit of a



A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 5: THE DREAM CHILD portrays a fetus as a sentient being who actually helps rescue his mother from Freddy's razors.

the young boy he will grow up to be. Not only that, he also helps save his mother's life from Freddy Krueger's razors.

Another life-saving pregnancy (at least for the mother) occurs in Sean Cunningham's *DEEPSTAR SIX*. In this ridiculous underwater monster drek, most of the cast martyr themselves to save the life of the one pregnant character. The script offers no suggestion that anything about this future mother personally warrants such sacrifice; the mere fact of her pregnancy sanctifies her life. Meanwhile, the film's only other sexually active female (who, unfortunately, was having recreational sex instead of starting a family) is summarily devoured by the film's marauding sea beast.

The perils of non-pregnancy were further detailed in an episode of *THE NEW TWILIGHT ZONE*, wherein a woman photographer is haunted by the ghost of the child she will never have, because she chose to pursue her career rather than settle down and get married. In this outrageously unreasonable guilt trip, the woman didn't even choose abortion; she simply chose not to get pregnant in the first place! The final fade-out, of course, leaves her in tears of regret because of this decision.

The notion of the unborn as savior reached its zenith in *THE SEVENTH SIGN*. This unfairly neglected piece cast Demi Moore as a

woman on whose unborn child rests the fate of the entire world. The premise is that, if the child is born dead, this will be the seventh sign heralding the apocalypse; the only way to avert this cataclysm is for Moore's character to sacrifice her own life in exchange for that of her baby. What sets this above the idiocy of *DEEPSTAR SIX* is that the sacrifice is made by the mother herself, not by others on her behalf. At least this elevates her to heroic proportions, instead of leaving her a mere vessel for a pregnancy, who must be saved by others.

In the entire horror genre, the closest example one can find to a

woman who intentionally aborts a normal human is not in a film at all but in the aforementioned *The Witching Hour*. In that novel, Rowan Mayfair is seduced into allowing a disincarnate spirit named Lasher to take possession of her unborn child—in effect, terminating her human pregnancy in favor of giving birth to an unhuman creature. The result of this decision, detailed in the sequel, is death and disaster for all concerned. When Michael, Rowan's husband and, technically, Lasher's father (actually, the father of the human who should have been born in Lasher's place) announces his intention to kill the being in spite of its eloquent plea for mercy, the first words out of his mouth are, "You killed my [unborn] child," as if this offense far outweighs the many adults Lasher has murdered. Then, with the moral authority of the entire universe on his side, Michael continues, "Kill you! I will kill you with pleasure! For St. Francis I will kill you. For St. Michael. For the Blessed Virgin and for the Christ Child you so love!"

This emotional speech neatly encapsulates the attitude of both literary and cinematic horror toward the unborn: whereas the non-human variety are invaders worthy of no mercy, the humans are innocents whose destruction is a sin unpardonable, for which no punishment short of violent death will suffice. This is hardly the stuff of liberal propaganda; if anything, it represents a traditional, conservative view. □

In THE SEVENTH SIGN, Demi Moore plays a woman who can rescue the world from Armageddon only by trading her life for that of her unborn child.



CINEMA

By Steve Biodrowski

THE BEST AND THE REST OF 1993

Some good cine, but short on fantastique.

1993 was not a terrible year for *cinéfantastique*, but it was far from great. With low-budget productions increasingly banished to video, we now must rely on the majors for big-screen science fiction, fantasy, and horror—which can be a risky proposition for genres that rely on inventive imagination rather than strict formula. Nevertheless, a number of interesting films did emerge from the studios; and the independents even managed to get a few of their better efforts into theatres. (Defining “theatrical” can be tricky, when many smaller films are briefly platformed in a few cities before going to tape. For the purpose of this list, any engagement open to the general public, no matter how limited, constitutes a theatrical release.)

THE BEST

1. The top film of the year, as everyone not in a coma knows, was JURASSIC PARK, the best dinosaur movie ever. (Okay, it's not as good as KING KONG. KING KONG is not a dinosaur movie; it's an ape movie, with the dinosaurs as costars.) Inevitably, such a popular attraction draws its share of naysayers, but don't let these cynics prevent the rest of us from opening our eyes in childlike wonder, exhilarated and stunned by the technique and artistry that brought dinosaurs to life as never before.

2. Another technical marvel of special effects was THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS. Any film that has parents saying it's too scary for their kids, while their kids

love it, has something going for it. A curious companion piece to JURASSIC PARK, in that both are about the limits of intellect: JURASSIC's John Hammond mistakenly thinks he and his staff can plan for every exigency and control the consequences, whereas Jack Skellington thinks he can know Christmas without really understanding it. In trying to analyze this alien (to him) holiday, he misses its spirit (or gestalt, if you prefer a less metaphysical term) and unable to find it, mistakenly concludes that it doesn't exist. Jack's attempt to reinvent the yuletide season is somewhat less disastrous than Hammond's attempt to recreate the Jurassic Period, but he nonetheless learns his lesson and goes back to doing what he truly understands.

3. After two unrated cult horror entries in the EVIL DEAD series, Sam Raimi turned ARMY OF DARKNESS into a rather more mainstream, slightly compromised, R-rated fantasy-adventure. Raimi's real strength has always been his manic inventiveness—somewhat in abeyance here, as he tries injecting some traditional plot elements into the old formula. These actually dilute the overall effect, because the enterprise is too outrageous to engage us in a traditional way (i.e., make us care what happens to the characters). On the other hand, Bruce Campbell's Ash is a perfect parody of the archetypal mythic hero, a self-centered, loud-mouthed jerk who happens to be good at fighting monsters—as



Filled with wit and imagination, Tim Burton's THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS is an enchantingly grim animated fairy tale for young and old.

long as he relies on instinct. The minute he stops to think, the consequences are devastating for all concerned. After garbage like DEMOLITION MAN, you wish Sylvester Stallone would get a clue from this.

4. An overrated film, but great nonetheless, is Peter Jackson's DEAD ALIVE, which benefited from being released the same year as ARMY. While gorehounds lamented the toned-down bloodshed of the R-rated effort, they could overpraise Jackson's unrated mayhem and claim that he had out-Raimied Raimi. Although there are superficial similarities (ie. gore and yucks), Jackson and Raimi are fundamentally different in approach. Raimi's films race from one showy set piece to the next, carrying the viewer along like a careening rollercoaster. Jackson, on the other hand, is making essentially a situation comedy, which could be titled “The Social Embarrassment of Zombies in the Basement.” Like Lucy hiding a disaster from Ricky, Jackson's protagonist conceals his zombie mother; unfortunately, she keeps escaping and creating new zombies, which her son must then add to the basement menagerie. The situation, at first barely manageable, inevitably boils out of control and explodes in a shower of blood. The real cleverness has faded by this point, but the built-up energy is enough to sustain the climax, including an array of dismemberment designed to sate even the most

jaded gorehound.

5. The midnight circuit gave us UROTSUKI-DOJI, perhaps the ultimate example of blood-soaked Japanimae. Most horror films suffer from undue restraint (even DEAD ALIVE relies on humor to diffuse its gory impact). Here, no degradation or perversion is too great, and no graphic detail is too excruciating. The film is certainly a misogynist's wet dream, which makes an even more horrifying theatrical experience, as you wonder about the mental stability of the audience around you. The film suffers slightly from being three edited-together episodes from an on-going series, which precludes a dramatically satisfying conclusion, but after an hour-and-a-half of excess, you'll be too relieved to quibble.

The shortage of great (as opposed to merely good) *cinéfantastique* has led me to include some less obvious choices. In some cases, these may be better films than ones higher on the list, but since their genre elements were relatively minimal, they are relegated to the second tier.

6. Ailing mini-major Orion picked up Jennifer Lynch's horrific study of obsessive love, BOXING HELENA (reviewed last issue), but failed to generate the kind of word-of-mouth necessary to draw audiences into the dark and twisted psychodrama. Maybe if they had spent the millions wasted on ROBOCOP 3...

7. “This is the moment of my death,

Spielberg's magnificent dino epic tops this year's best list in spite of Clarence Bodicker's thoughtfully articulated criticism (see Letters, Page 62).



and I have no fear," thinks Jeff Bridges' character in *FEARLESS*. Ostensibly about the psychological sojourn of a crash survivor, Peter Weir's film harkens back to the mystical tone of his Australian work. The astoundingly realized plane wreck is presented less as a catastrophe than as a religious epiphany, and a near-death experience, complete with tunnel of light, pushes this into the genre category.

8. Listing a film biography may stretch the definition of *cinéfantastique*. Nevertheless, *DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY*, in a tactic reminiscent of Terry Gilliam's work in *BRAZIL* and *THE FISHER KING*, externalizes its protagonist's inner turmoil with a number of fantasy sequences, wherein the martial arts star battles a demon. These scenes also create an eerie sense of premonition as Lee's struggle is supposed to protect his son, Brandon, from facing a similar fate.

9. Neither Vincent Ward's *MAP OF THE HUMAN HEART*, nor Alan Rudolph's *EQUINOX* is in the strictest sense fantasy, but they nonetheless deserve to be included in this list. The fantasy element is not the content but the style, and by style I mean not gaudy pyrotechnics but overall vision. Both Ward and Rudolph create worlds recognizable and yet recognizably different from the one in which we live daily life. As a result, they can ignore many demands of conventional drama (such as plausibility and verisimilitude) in favor of a kind of hyper-realism which grants free rein to their vivid imaginations.

10. With two films tied for Number 9, there is no real need to fill the Number Ten slot. However, the platform re-release of *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA* (to tubthump the laserdisk) provided a brief opportunity to rediscover the pleasure of this classic on the big screen. Quite an achievement it is, a film far superior to the majority of today's genre efforts, with production design and technical effects that have dated hardly at all. Even more amazing, for a Disney production, is the level of complexity in the characters, especially in James Mason's portrayal of Captain Nemo. Kudos also to Earl Fenton's script for condensing Jules Verne's loosely structured tale into something resembling a dramatic plot.

THE REST

Worthy mention must go to several other films, even if they are not

complete successes. *MATINEE*, highlighted by a film-within-a-film entitled *MANT*, captures a wonderful sense of child-like nostalgia for the old-fashioned monster flicks of the early '60s; it succeeds less well at conveying a sense of dread over the era's very real Cuban Missile Crisis. The film actually improved on laserdisk, where the *MANT* footage, in a special supplement, was edited together into a sort of mini-movie.

Also entertaining in a light and humorous way was *GROUNDHOG DAY*. Bill Murray amused us in this *TWILIGHT ZONE*-type variation on the Showtime short "12:01 P.M.", but the film was a pleasure without ever quite being a delight (except for Andie MacDowell, who is always delightful).

Brian Yuzna has produced some important horror films, but until *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III*, he showed little promise as a director. There are some missteps here, but he has finally gained some competence at staging action and directing actors. All of this would be of only moderate interest were it not for the portrayal of Mindy Clarke, a performance which captures a truly morbid sense of the romantic, wherein the only perfect consummation of love is death. Thanks to her, this film deserved more than the stealth release it received from Trimark, who instead flushed away millions of dollars in prints and advertising on the execrable *WARLOCK: THE ARMAGEDDON*.

BATMAN: THE MASK OF THE PHANTASM brought the animated afternoon series to the big screen, with considerably more success than *BATMAN*, but considerably less than the underrated *BATMAN RETURNS*. The animation technique, though ambitious, and the story, though interesting, lacked the



Though *ARMY OF DARKNESS* is not up to par with the antics of *EVIL DEAD II*, the fantasy-adventure is good enough to land on this year's Top Ten list.

scope to fully justify the feature treatment. These quibbles aside, the result still showed all the strengths that have made the series such a hit, including a portrayal of the title character that, unlike Michael Keaton, does justice to the comic book inspiration.

TICKS (given brief regional distribution as *INFESTED*) is a film that did the job it set out to do: provide lots of "scary fun," in the words of director Tony Randel. The attempts at characterization, although laudable, never quite materialized; still, this never descended into the gorefest it could have been, and the effects work always elicits gasps of fear rather than gags of disgust.

FORTRESS, like Stuart Gordon's earlier sci-fi effort *ROBOT JOX*, is inferior to the Lovecraft adaptations that made him famous, but this time it's at least fun to watch, in a cheerful no-brainer kind of way. Also, it's consistent with the themes of sexual repression prevalent in his horror films: Kurtwood Smith's repressed warden seems a

distant but direct descendant of Lance Henrikson's *Torquemada* in *THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM*. Unfortunately, the demands of the form dictate that Gordon must focus his attention to the more conventional leading man played by Christopher Lambert. Like so many practitioners of the outre, Gordon has a gift for villains but little insight into heroes, and he is not aided by a star who has yet to click with American audiences.

Roger Corman's *CARNOSAUR* wasn't much of a movie, lacking the wise-ass cleverness that made *PIRANHA* such a cult hit; but the release itself was a real hoot, garnering incredible media exposure due to the obvious timing. In Hollywood, the film's star was actually in attendance in the theatre lobby. Seeing the rubbery dino in person made one realize why so little of it was seen in the film.

After this, the list gets rather dismal. *ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES* proved that you should quit while you're ahead. *THE DARK HALF* proved that George Romero should get back to Pittsburgh and direct his own material, instead of adapting other people's novels. *WITCHBOARD 2* proved that one decent film does not necessarily make a franchise. *CHILDREN OF THE CORN 2* proved that, no matter how bad the original, the sequel can still be worse. *JASON GOES TO HELL: THE FINAL FRIDAY* proved that no one cares. *SUPER MARIO BROTHERS* proved that three things are certain in this world: death, taxes, and extensive *CFQ* coverage of films that should never have been made. Finally, *CAREFUL* proved that some critics feel brilliantly perceptive when they lavish superlatives on pretentious junk. □

Though actually a 1954 production, the brief release of a restored *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA* made it one of the best theatrical events of 1993.



VIDEOPHILE

by John Thonen

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY: Surveying this Year's Direct-to-Video Offerings

On the surface, the idea of a column on the top Direct to Video releases (herewith DTV) of 1993 seems deceptively simple. After reviewing the year's output, however, the task becomes a bit more formidable. The worst, hell...no problem. But good ones?

Traditionally DTV films are born of low budgets (note that I did not use the "B" word), short production schedules, and marginally experienced casts and crews, coupled with a reliance on breasts, blood, and bullets as exploitable hooks. Ultimately, this leaves the DTV arena best observed for a well executed moment or a flash of genuine talent, rather than a brilliantly executed whole.

The average DTV is a slightly different breed from most theatrical releases, and I chose to judge them by slightly different standards. If the following "Best" films were really all that great, our editor would have covered them in his "Cinema" column. In recognition of this inherent weakness, I've broken down my "winners" into categories where their particular strengths are more noteworthy. To round things out, I'm also including the worst release in each category. First up:

BEST CHARLES BAND PRODUCTION

Any discussion of DTV that fails to mention Charles Band would be akin to a history of Rock 'n' Roll that ignores Chuck Berry. For better or worse, Band's mid-'80s home video label, Wizard, offered releases that provided the seminal influences for today's burgeoning DTV industry.

Our critic flushes HELLMASTER to the bottom of the DTV toilet.



Richard Stanley's *DUST DEVIL* tops the category Best Direct-to-Video Horror Film, "more for what it attempts than for what it actually accomplishes."

Today, Band's Full Moon Video label has established itself as a consumer-recognized brand-name, something no other DTV supplier has accomplished. But being a recognized name doesn't make the Big Mac a gourmet meal or Full Moon productions good films. So, more in honor of Band's influence than his quality, the award for Best Charles Band Production goes to *CURSE IV* (Columbia/Epic).

The consistently popular *CURSE* films are actually unrelated DTV efforts retitled to appear part of a series. This story of a demonic spirit escaping from centuries of entombment in a monastery has little new to offer (save the lunacy of Timothy Van Patten as a monk!), but director David Schmoeller enlivens the proceedings with considerable visual flair. Though it never quite equals the bravura filmmaking of the film's opening segment, Schmoeller's striking imagery dances in and out of the film's weaker elements to hold viewer interest far better than the stale plot.

CURSE IV, originally titled *CATACOMBS*, is a 1989 Band production, one of the last remnants of his now bankrupt Empire Studios. I include the film partially because this is the first time most fans have been able to see it. Also, it illustrates that Band's product has really not improved in the intervening years. A half-decade later, Schmoeller's latest Band-produced effort, *SUBSPECIES III: BLOODSTONE*, exhibits only the same strengths and weaknesses.

All of which brings us to the more hotly contested award for the Worst Charles Band Production: *DOLLMAN VS DEMONIC TOYS* (Paramount/Full Moon).

There is nothing inherently wrong with Band's conceit that all his films take place in the same fantasy universe. (Frankly the idea of Dr. Mordrid someday meeting Jack Deth holds some appeal for me.) However, this combination of title characters from two of Band's worst DTV productions, and one from the equally abysmal *BAD CHANNELS*, actually manages to be worse than its less-than-illustrious progenitors. A short running time, padded by scenes from the earlier films, does nothing to alleviate the agony of this total dud.

BEST HORROR FILM

The horror film has followed its languid theatrical decline by losing popularity in home video as well. Still, promising horror that might have once seen theatrical release now appears DTV. Case in point:

Richard Stanley's *DUST DEVIL* is a classic example of a film that is noteworthy more for what it attempts than for what it accomplishes. Stanley seems well aware that horror's current doldrums are largely due to a paucity of new ideas and approaches. He bravely tosses the standard dark, expressionistic motifs for a style based on the look of the Italian western, as realized by its finest proponent, Sergio Leone.

One suspects that the 18 minutes shorn from the director's cut

are not the loss Stanley has implied. What's missing seems to be scenes with the singularly unappealing lead characters. Better that we are allowed to concentrate on the film's beautiful images and imaginative approach. *DUST DEVIL* is basically a failure but a brave and noble one. Rare qualities in the days of *FRIDAY THE 13TH: PART WHATEVER THE HELL IT WAS*.

On the other extreme, '93's worst horror title has practically nothing to offer but more of the same. *HELLMASTER* (AIP) is a pathetic amalgamation of genre clichés made all the more frustrating by virtue of the technical competence that presents it all. Bad filmmaking by people who obviously have no idea what they are doing is almost forgivable, but *HELLMASTER*'s creators are obviously technically skilled. Still, a well polished turd smells pretty much the same.

BEST SCIENCE FICTION FILM

While horror's decline is depressing, it has been somewhat offset by the newfound popularity of another fantastic genre standard, science-fiction. This year's best DTV example, Phillip J. Cook's *INVADER* (Vidmark), is not only a highly entertaining effort, but one that may mark the advent of a major new genre talent. The film is basically a loving tribute to sci-fi of the '50s, updated with '90s concepts, then filtered through gentle parody and given just a dash of *DR. STRANGELOVE*.

The basic tale revolves around a reporter for a national tabloid who follows up an article on killer, mutant goats by jetting off to research a UFO sighting in Virginia. There he finds a military base commander who has cannibalized a downed UFO, trying to create new super weapons. Instead, he has unleashed an alien computer virus that has reprogrammed everything of an electronic nature on the base, including the minds of the soldiers.

The film skirts around too many styles, without ever settling on one, and a few of the numerous effects sequences are more impressive for ambition than effectiveness. But Cook has made *INVADERS* consistently fun; and its

effects, in spite of their quantity, are used to enhance the story without ever becoming the tail that wags the dog.

INVADER shows that low-budget doesn't always have to mean low-concept and low-talent. Conversely, low-budget often *does* mean low-concept and low-talent—case in point, ULTRAWARRIOR (New Horizons). Roger Corman's employees have been putting together "patch-up" films like this for years. Take expensive scenes from half a dozen or more different films, and use them as stock footage for an inexpensively filmed wrap-around story that somehow pulls all the diverse elements together. Sometimes it works well (HOLLYWOOD BLVD); more often, it's barely tolerable (SPACE RAIDERS), and now and then it ceases to be a real movie at all. That is ULTRAWARRIOR.

BEST "OUTLAW" FILM

As low as the budget of ULTRAWARRIOR was, it's astronomical next to the semi-pro or downright amateur backyard movies I call, "Outlaw Films." Thus, the final category in my year end review.

These are the movies you see advertised in the classifieds of *Film Threat*, *CFQ*, and other film-related publications. They are less than low-budget; they are generally no-budget. Shot on video or Super-8, the results are often astoundingly bad. Still it's a burgeoning phenomena, and it seems only a matter of time until some total unknown pulls an EL MARIACHI out of his hat.

The closest approximation to that trick in '93 would have to be J.R. Bookwalter's OZONE (Tempe). Bookwalter has been producing these films longer than almost anyone, and he has even established his own label to distribute his and other outlaw product. Here, he works with a fraction of a budget, shooting on tape and then passing the footage through a "Film-Look" system to lessen video's more annoying visual qualities.

Despite the storyline's street-drug origins, this is basically a zombie movie. The injection of a standard tough, rebellious cop in the lead is also nothing groundbreaking. However, most outlaw movies don't even have characters or storylines. OZONE has both, well developed and interesting, albeit not particularly new. It represents a quantum leap for this new film movement and increased promise for where it all may go.

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TELEVISION

by Mark A. Altman

If I can paraphrase Frank Sinatra for a moment (which will probably be the first and last time that happens in IMAGI-MOVIES), it was a pretty good year for science-fiction television. For years there's been a dearth of genre fare on the major networks but with the success of imaginative programming in first-run syndication, along with the preponderance of original cable offerings, there has been a virtual renaissance of the form on television.

1. The most remarkable genre achievement of the year was the Oliver Stone-produced miniseries WILD PALMS. Not since the masterful PBS adaptation of Ursula K. LeGuinn's LATHE OF HEAVEN has the mass-media propagated such a literate brand of science-fiction on the small screen. WILD PALMS may have been miscast in places, but the power of its disturbing and haunting images remained long after its final chapter played out on the screen.

Moody and dark, WILD PALMS angst-ridden techno-future is the most depressingly bleak since BLADE RUNNER and far more plausible. Although its last hour, which wraps up the many narrative strands, is the least satisfying part of the six-hour epic, WILD PALMS promises to stand as a noteworthy classic of the genre.

2. For those who had written off DEEP SPACE NINE many months ago, producers Michael Piller and Rick Berman delivered a startling rebuff with a string of powerful episodes which boast not only taut writing but also impressive direction that far exceeds the usually pedestrian helming of episodic television. The season-opening troika of political intrigue and espionage (comprised of "The Homecoming," "The Circle" and "The Siege") proved to be remarkable television. Unfortunately, even though it was TREK's first three-part episode, the story still manages to suffer from the old TREK failing of an inadequate resolution. Despite this, every aspect of the production is executed with finesse straight down the line, including Louise Fletcher's malevolent turn as Vedek Winn and Frank Langella's magnificent outing as a manipulative Bajoran political op-

TOP TEN TELEVISION

It was a very good year.



The Oliver Stone-produced mini-series WILD PALMS, written by Bruce Wagner, was television's "most remarkable genre achievement of the year."

portunist (who bore a striking resemblance to Bob Dole).

3. DS9's sister series, THE NEXT GENERATION, scored with a number of its best hours during the second half of its sixth year, although its seventh and final season, began with an atrocity called "Descent II," the worst kick-off for a TREK season since "Spock's Brain." Clearly, NEXT GENERATION's most outstanding hour was "Tapestry," a wonderfully witty and yet provocative retake on "It's A Wonderful Life," in which Picard must revisit a defining moment of his life under the watchful eye of Q.

4. Although THE YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES sometimes played more like a history lesson than entertainment, it was when George Lucas' mandate to educate segued effortlessly with a compelling action-adventure storyline that the series worked—and it never worked better than in "Young Indiana Jones & The Mystery of the Blues." Although the promotional gimmick of having Harrison Ford narrate the yarn failed to spark audience interest, "Mystery of the Blues" is a richly produced and rewarding two hours which combine excitement, education, and great music. Who could ask for anything more?

5. Since we're listing individual

episodes and not overall series, there's no reason a show can't pop up twice. Although DEEP SPACE NINE has been inconsistent, episodes such as "In the Hands of the Prophets," "Necessary Evil," "Cardassians" (a story of Cardassian war orphans), and "Duet" (Peter Allan Field's thinly veiled allegory about Nazi war crimes with a tour-de-force performance by Harris Yulin as a Cardassian accused of heinously brutal acts) were all top-notch science-fiction. Still, the only other episode to warrant inclusion in the top-ten was the pilot, "Emisary" which boasted feature-film production values and an engaging first hour.

6. George Lucas also showed up in front of the camera in a wonderful PBS documentary aired as part of their "American Masters" series. Everything that has been done on the reclusive filmmaker for the commercial networks has smacked of recycled press kit fodder, but "American Masters" proves far more insightful and in-depth than previous profiles of the STAR WARS creator. Although it occasionally meanders and spends too much time on inconsequential Lucas missteps such as WILLOW, it's a fascinating look at a man who sometimes seems more hype than human.

7. LOIS & CLARK, which began as diverting but completely light-

1993 IN REVIEW

weight entertainment has since evolved into one of the better hours on television. Boasting witty and sharp writing, the show is at its best when it showcases moments of Sturges-like screwball comedy and self-reflexive wit (one episode has someone comment, 'Don't tug on Superman's cape, and don't spit into the wind') as opposed to the grandiose super-heroics which fail to ignite on the small screen. The series' two charismatic stars, Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher, lead a superb ensemble which includes the acerbic Lane Smith as Perry White and a malevolent, silver-tongued Lex Luthor played ably by John Shea. The recent writing renaissance on the series led to some of its best hours, including Superman's return to Smallville ("The Green Glow of Home") and an episode (wherein the man of steel is believed responsible for Metropolis' exceptionally hot weather) which included a cameo by Sonny Bono as the Mayor who notes wryly, 'The heat goes on.' The series best hour so far has been "I've Got a Crush On You," in which Lois goes undercover as a sultry lounge singer to nab a bunch of arsonists. As with most of the episodes, it's not the super-corny comic book plots that matter, but the super sparks between its appealing and lusty leads that make this show, for lack of a better phrase, super sci-fi television.

For those who had written off DS9, the producers offered a rebuff, with a string of brilliant episodes.



8. Superheroes need not be live-action, nor tongue-in-cheek, as **BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES** proved. Combining the outstanding vocal talents of actors Kevin Conroy, Efrem Zimbalist Jr., Bob Hastings, Bobby Constanza (the actor who topped Dennis Franz as the sleaziest thespian on television in **NYPD BLUE**—quite a feat) and a veritable rogues' gallery of supporting villains, this noir-ish take on the mythos is one of the most impressive cartoons ever to air on television, thanks to its talented coterie of artists and writers whose episodes have paid homage to everything from Fritz Lang's German Expressionist pictures to Sturges' **SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS** ("The Forgotten") to Serling's **TWILIGHT ZONE** ("Perchance to Dream"). Even its worst episodes have been better than the feature films which preceded it. Among the best in 1993 are Part One of "The Demon's Quest" with David Warner voicing the malevolent Ras Al Ghoul and "Read My Lips" with George Dzundza speaking the words of a ventriloquist and his dummy.

9. Among the two-hour telefilms that aired this year, a number warrant serious mention, particularly because they were widely overlooked. While the plodding **BABYLON 5** pilot and the moronic **SEA QUEST** premiere received the lion's share of attention, Fox's **LIFEPOD**, a futuristic retelling of Hitchcock's **LIFEBOAT**, boasted some strong performances from its ensemble cast, including Robert Loggia and Jessica Tuck, and assured directing by freshman helmer Ron Silver, who captures the claustrophobic atmosphere within the confines of the doomed lifepod. Although the telefilm's writing occasionally lapses into the contrived, its flaws are outweighed by its moving pathos and inventive premise. In the television s.f. genre, which is often typified by a pastiche of overworked clichés and underdeveloped characters, **LIFEPOD** is the rare exception, a thoughtful and bleak pressure cooker of a thriller which proves anything but lifeless.

10. Surprisingly, HBO also scored with a moving tale of near-future apocalypse, **DAYBREAK**, an AIDS allegory which proved disturbing, suspenseful, and, at times, downright prescient. Cuba Gooding Jr. is the protagonist who is stricken with a plague that has led to much



The Emmy Award-winning animated **BATMAN series is "one of the most impressive cartoons ever to air on television, thanks to its artists and writers."**

of America's population being quarantined by its quasi-fascist leadership. It's a harrowing and all-too-credible future that reminds one how fortunate we are to be spared from a Republican presidency.

Also worth mentioning is PTEN's **TIME TRAX** which began with a lightweight but agreeable two-hour premiere, "A Man Out of Time" which has simply degenerated into a hi-tech, high-concept, gadget-filled variation on **THE FUGITIVE**. The fledgling network's other offering, **BABYLON 5**, which showcased some innovative special effects and exceptional shoestring production values, suffered from poor pacing and bad editing, although its trio of alien ambassadors scored with lively performances, and the upcoming series promises to be highly entertaining.

Rysher Entertainment's **HIGHLANDER** isn't nearly as bad as it should be and probably a helluva lot better than either feature film—which isn't saying much, but it is still worth an occasional look. As for the other would-be science-fiction contenders, such as Steve Spielberg's underwater sub-trek fiasco **SEA QUEST** and Trilogy's shameless **STAR WARS** wannabe **SPACE RANGERS**, the less said the better.

On the horror front, **TALES FROM THE CRYPT** turned in another spooky year of comic-book derived yarns featuring the cackling cryptkeeper's witty repartee. **CRYPT** continues to provide a filling diet of empty but mind-numbingly fun calories with well-cast tales. (Frankly, I'd still rather watch

LARRY SANDERS). Less satiating was John Carpenter's trilogy of ghoulish vignettes, the Showtime telefilm **BODY BAGS**, which, despite a few moments of grave depravity and giddy delight proved overall to be a derivative and low-budget exercise in inane bloodletting.

X-FILES has proven to be a poor man's **NIGHT STALKER**, lacking the stardom of Darren McGavin's frumpled Carl Kolchak, but providing the requisite otherworldly evil meanies to challenge our team of FBI do-gooders. The jury is still out on this one.

I have been told that **EXO-SQUAD** and **CADILLACS AND DINOSAURS** are excellent and surprisingly literate animated genre fare, but I haven't had the chance to sample them, because they air far too early in the morning for this night-owl reporter to rise and shine. As for the fledgling Sci-Fi Channel's attempts at programming, I can't comment, as I am situated in Los Angeles, which is sadly devoid of the station that some fans have joked should be called the "Bad Sci-Fi Channel" because of its mix of hokey '60s Irwin Allen hours, '70s kitsch and bad '80s spandex sci-fiers. Until this sad situation is remedied, I will be denied the opportunity of reliving the humorless drama of **SPACE: 1999's** moon odyssey, the lavishly produced but wildly uneven **BATTLESTAR: GALACTICA**, and the curvy Pamela Hemsley as Princess Ardala in **BUCK ROGERS**. Maybe I should move to Des Moines. Then again, maybe not. □

ROSALIND ALLEN

continued from page 37

Recently, Allen has gone on to better things, stepping away from menacing children and mutant ticks, to give a fine guest performance (including an exquisitely melodramatic death scene) in a four-part episode of CBS's cop series, **BODIES OF EVIDENCE**. "It was a totally different kind of character than the movie stuff I've done," she enthuses. "In the films, I've done down-to-earth, almost Earth-Motherish women. In this series, I'm a nymphomaniac, which was fun for a change."

Although her genre work may not have sparked any great love for horror films, she wouldn't mind making more, if on a larger scale. "I would love to have done **BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA**—I mean, the original script. There were a lot of changes in [the final film], but working with a director like Francis Ford Coppola would be an honor. What I loved about the script is that you cared about Dracula. It was twisted emotions, because at one moment you totally felt for him, and at another you were disgusted. So often, you can be looking at a script, and it's easy to say you just don't care. There's no integrity; there's nothing."

Allen has turned down a number of scripts such as these for ethical reasons. "I'm not one for nudity much," she explains. "I'm a married woman. I feel that women are thrown around and taken advantage of that way. I think that in the right context it can be beautiful and appropriate, but in most movies, especially on my level at this point, it's inappropriate and unnecessary. I'm turning down a lot of those."

"I have a real tenacity about filmmaking at this point in my career," she continues, "but I do believe that on a whole films should be made to give an audience something—not just entertain them but perhaps give them hope or a joy of life. In many of these films, it's just sex for sex' sake. There's a dark side of violence mixed with sex, like in **BASIC INSTINCT**, which I hated. Another movie I hated was **CAPE FEAR**—it just devastated me. It took away everything; it didn't give anything back. A lot of movies I'm saying no to are not able to give something. Even if it's purely entertainment, I want it to be positive. I want to

inspire people. It's the reason I became an actor, in a sense. As a performer, you can shed light on areas of life that people might think about, and it changes life."

As an example of what she would like to achieve, Allen cites Lawrence Kasdan's **GRAND CANYON**. "It was an accurate picture of living in Los Angeles. It really made you step back and say, 'Well, even if we're living in a city that can be so harsh, there are moments of beauty, so let's stop and see the miracles in life. I loved it for that.'"

For the future, Allen is looking forward to "working with some great directors, doing some decent roles. That's my next step, doing bigger movies, even if smaller parts. I don't necessarily want to be a recognized star; I'd just like to be known as a competent person who can do lots of different things. I'll just work my way up, so 20 years from now they'll say I'm an overnight success." □

VIDEOPHILE

continued from page 59

As if to make the point that the movement still has a long way to go, 1993 also saw the release of the latest effort of the prolific and notably incompetent Todd Sheets. **ZOMBIE BLOODBATH** is totally described in its title, and there is no reason to go any further than that. Sheets, obviously a horror fan, includes homages to his favorite directors—Romero, Argento, etc.—with no understanding of the actual purpose behind these artists' visual style. The film is not badly acted; it is not acted at all. Little makes sense: the sound is awful, as is the lighting. There is no justification for watching this, no justification for its even existing for that matter.

Corman and Band represent the two leading players in the current DTV sweepstakes, and both set sales records in '93 (Band with the kid-oriented **PREHYS-TERIA** and Corman with the well-timed **CARNOSAUR**), but the times-they-are-a-changin'. '94 will see Universal enter the fray with direct-to-video sequels to Sam Raimi's **DARKMAN** and Don Coscarelli's **PHANTASM**. To continue dominating the concept they pioneered, Corman, Band, and other DTV producers must either step up their quality or face fading away, as the once myriad independent production companies have already done. It should be an interesting year. □

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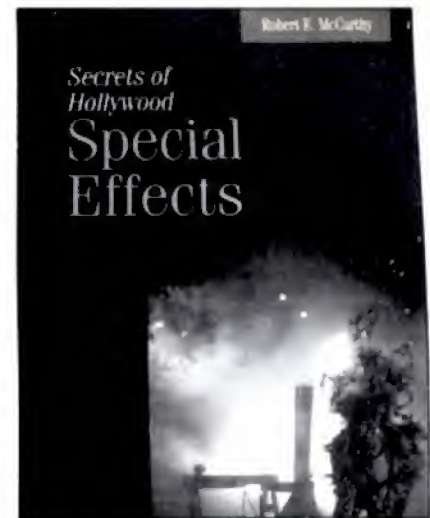
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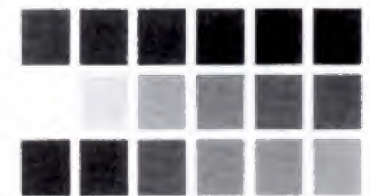
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LETTERS

PSYCHOTIC REACTION

The reason JURASSIC PARK stunk and JAWS was a better film is because [sic] JAWS had much better acting in it [,] ya fuck[.] Get a real fucking job[.] ya loser[.] stop being spiteful just because [sic] your [sic] not in the fucking film business[.] cocksucker[.] gayboy[.] fudge packer[.]

Clarence Bodicker
Santa Mira, CA

[I love letters like this—the guy hurls homophobic insults while keeping himself in the closet by using a pseudonym. (Draw your own conclusions.) I should point out that the premise of my JURASSIC PARK review was that negative reactions to the film have not articulated any convincing arguments, and nothing in this letter changes my mind on that score. By the way, "Clarence," what makes you think I want to be in the film industry—so I can have fans like you spewing forth invective in defense of an over-rated film released nearly 20 years ago? I have a real job; maybe you should get one yourself, so that the next time you write a letter you can afford a dictionary.]

AT LEAST WE AGREE ON SLEEPWALKERS

You know damn well that if you were on the receiving end of the gleefully vicious review given to SLEEPWALKERS [CFQ 1:23:61], you would react in exactly the same way as Stephen King. Cloaking your mean-spiritedness in "journalistic integrity," as you have done in your comments in the LETTERS page, doesn't obscure your real agenda, i.e., trashing a hugely popular writer because you have decided he's got an "ego problem." Frankly, it sounds like King bruised your ego, and apparently you're not immune to the same kind of defensive response. I was looking forward to reading about the filming of THE STAND, but thanks to your "ego problem," I won't get that chance. For the record, I thought SLEEPWALKERS was awful.

Ian Harris
Calgary, Alberta

[Your armchair analysis is presumptuous to the point of absurdity. When someone refuses to grant interviews—not to me personally but to CFQ in general—unless he receives only favorable reviews, then

that is indeed his ego problem, and refusing such a quid pro quo arrangement is a matter of integrity. By the way, you can read about THE STAND in the April CFQ, no thanks to King, who attempted to block our coverage at every turn.]

SUGGESTION BOX

I really enjoy IMAGI-MOVIES, so I may subscribe later. In the meantime, I am enclosing \$8.00 for Issue #2. One suggestion: KING KONG is my all-time favorite film. Now that it's 60 years old, how about some coverage? I've always wondered who were the stunt persons who took Fay Wray and Bruce Cabot's place when they were scrambling off the cliff to escape Kong. Any ideas? Keep up the fine work—you have another winner.

Jack H. Norrell
Gainesville, GA

I enjoyed your first issue of IMAGI-MOVIES—it was further refreshing with its absence of any STAR TREK articles. This magazine is what CINEFANTASTIQUE used to be. If Issue #2 is as good as #1, I'll probably subscribe!

Joe Lopez
Van Nuys, CA

I recently bought and read the first issue of IMAGI-MOVIES, and, since you made a point in your editorial of soliciting feedback, I thought to offer mine. Basically, what I like best about IMAGI-MOVIES is that it reminds me of CINEFANTASTIQUE when it was a really good magazine. I subscribed from the start and have resolutely read every issue, tracking with great regret the recent decline in coverage, intelligence, reviews, and scope. Now little more than a less-tacky version of FANGORIA grafted onto a public-relations machine for STAR TREK in its many flaccid current variants, CINEFANTASTIQUE is a pale shadow of its former excellence, irrevocably skidding ever downward in quality.

IMAGI-MOVIES has lots of promise. What I liked most were: first, the reviews, which comment fairly intelligently on a reasonable range of movies, including several we readers might otherwise overlook; second, the return to print of Randall D. Larson's ever thoughtful column, "The Score." Music is an integral part of all films but intensely so for genre films. Larson knows

his stuff and is quite capable of using this important forum to attract readers who might otherwise not pay much attention to music.

Of your major articles, the most interesting was Todd French's on UROTSUKI-DOJI. Not only was this a well-researched piece, it clued me in to a film I knew nothing about. I've since gotten the first film, only to find the article equally useful for subsequent viewings. Stephen M. Reese's defense of ALIEN³ was a nice change from the exaggerated bashing the film has taken, and Mark Burman's interview with Fincher is superior to others I've read, at least for getting him to open up about what must have been a dreadful experience.

Of less interest were the articles on films in production. Such pieces, even if well-written (e.g., Kenneth Winikoff on NEEDFUL THINGS), serve as little more than promotion. Anyway, FANGORIA does this kind of thing absolutely to death. Save your precious pages for more in-depth articles, more reviews, more interviews, more argumentative pieces, and more retrospectives. CINEFANTASTIQUE used to do wonderful, thorough retrospectives on classics. These articles are so good I re-read them when I watch the films. They're one of the reasons I keep those back issue--recent issues usually wind up in the cat box.

So, I hope you continue to develop IMAGI-MOVIES along the lines laid down in the first issue. I will keep buying it: One more good issue and I'll subscribe and start trying to get all my friends to do so as well. Above all, please don't turn it into a spitting image of your parent magazine, which I've about decided to abandon. (One more exhaustive and exhausting article on STAR TREK, just one, and I'm out...) Thanks for a neat magazine. May it flourish.

Michael A. Morrison
Norman, OK

[Letters like these are far scarier than anything "Clarence" could ever write. How can one possibly live up to this wonderful and hard-earned praise you've heaped on my predecessor? Let's just say that I've been trying my best to follow the pace he set before circumstances forced him to pass the baton to me. We will continue with many of the features that pleased Mr. Morrison (co-editor of NECROFILE, The Review

of Horror Fiction). As for a retrospective of KING KONG, it's a little difficult at this late date, when so many of the creative principals are no longer with us; coincidentally, there is a MIGHTY JOE YOUNG retro in the works that we may have room for sometime soon.]

GLAD SOMEONE THINKS SO

I've got to agree (with everyone who already has or soon will tell you) that IM#2 is a sizable improvement over #1. Of course, featuring yet another Stephen King movie on the cover scared the bejeezus out of all of us who were primed to expect IM to look like vintage issues of CFQ!

Randy Palmer
Greensboro, NC

CORRECTION BOX

I would like to note a couple more errors in my RED DWARF piece in the first issue. First, acknowledgment of the essential work provided by Theresa and Todd Apple, who conducted the interview with Grant and Naylor based on my questions, was dropped. Ed Bye was sole producer and director only for the first two seasons. The description of Kryten as the "android Norman Bates" was taken out of context and is very misleading. Additionally, the photo on Page 13 is of Kryten and Camille, not the evil Rimmer and Cat from "Demons and Angels."

Dennis Fischer
Paramount, CA

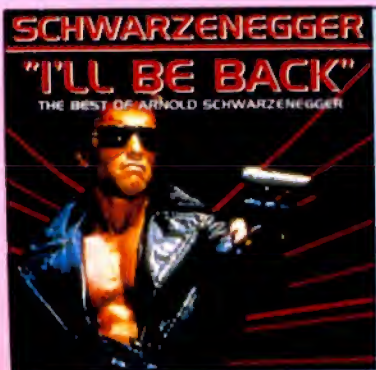
[Sorry about the errors in IM 1:1. And we're even sorrier your valuable contribution to the TICKS article in IM 1:2 went uncredited.]

ERRATA

Last issue misspelled the names of Anthony P. Montesano, Christopher S. Dietrich, and director Nicolas Roeg. The lower photo on Page 60 failed to identify composer Joe Delia as second from the right. The mangled sentences of the CINEMA column were supposed to read: "[T]he human mind tends to organize information; where no pattern exists, the mind invents one, creating an appearance of the supernatural out of random coincidence. The phenomenon is equally apparent in film criticism, where opinion often has less to do with the work at hand than with the reviewer's attempt to fit the work into a pattern of his own invention."

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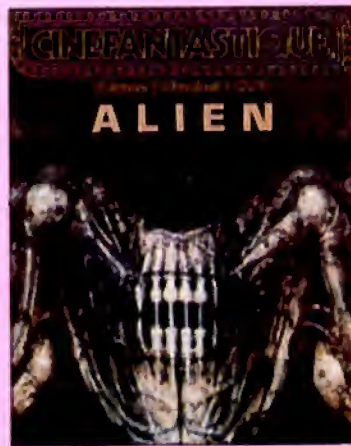
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Brinke Stevens

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